

Five Reasons Poetry Acts as Spiritual Practice

By Jacinta V. White



1. **Poetry slows us down.** To read and write poetry require that we take time to absorb the words and the emotion. In this fast-paced rat race world, poetry is the welcome balm (or reason) we need to slow down. As we ponder words, pause at line breaks, and examine the feeling behind a verse, we are engaging in a practice that keeps us in a rhythm. This rhythm holds us like a loving mother does her newborn child. When we slow down we find it easier to connect with that which we are longing – our inner spirit. An “attending to” nature takes over in our creative process and the page is there to capture the essence.
2. **Poetry connects us to ourselves.** When we slow down we are able to hear our thoughts, feel our heartbeat, listen to our breath. What becomes buried begins to surface. We see a mirror in our poetry and the process of creating it that shows us a deeper side of ourselves. In writing poetry, we make love to ourselves. We honor ourselves. We are reminded of what it feels like to be close to ourselves and that which we love. That alone is sacred.
3. **Poetry connects us to something greater.** I refer to this “something greater” as God. You may call it something else. This doesn’t change that poetry making/creating/writing can serve as an altar, a meeting place, a thin space where the self and the Spirit collide and collaborate. There is a call and response process. Sometimes it’s messy (like waiting for the “right” word) and sometimes it flows effortlessly. Just like life.
4. **Poetry gives us language.** Whether we are astute poetry lovers or novices, when we write poetry we discover deeper meaning to who we are and to our life. We play with words and ideas in a way we may not in our ordinary day. Our senses are reawakened and this new found love that poetry writing offers lends itself to new found words and syntax. Our everyday language becomes heightened as if we are standing on our tiptoes

reaching some God in the sky. With poetry, our metaphors, similes, tone and syntax show up as surprise and sacred.

5. **Poetry helps us reimage the world.** Though poetry writing is mostly an individual act it moves us into a greater space of being. Our reading and writing poetry prepare us to shape and share our authentic thoughts on whatever topic we're grappling with or inspired by. The very act of being still, connecting with ourselves and God, ushers us into reimagining the world – be it our private world or our universal world – in a way that we see ourselves not as helpless beings but as co-creators!

Jacinta V. White is a poet, founder of The Word Project, and publisher of *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art & Healing*. To learn more or register for her online class, "Awakening Presence: Poetry as Spiritual Practice," visit poetryheals.com

