Rites

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I. Initiation

Half awake in darkness
Camel sighs and Bedouin whispers
At the base of Moses’ mountain.

“Do we climb at night to avoid the heat?”

“No,” our guide replies.
“We travel in darkness
Because if you could see
How far you must go,
You would not have the courage
To begin.”

A lamp glows amber from the window
High in the monastery wall.
A perfect crescent moon
Cups a bright burning star.

Do you accept the path
That has been made clear?

II. Baptism

My Lord changed the water into wine.
My Lord looks inside and sees what’s fine.
When I slipped into the Jordan’s deep
I came back up with my soul to keep.
My Lord changed the water into wine.

My Lord healed the wounded and the sick.
My Lord guides which path I pick.
When the Jordan’s waters closed over me,
I broke through the surface and could truly see.
My Lord healed the wounded and the sick.
My Lord resisted temptation and sin.
My Lord gives me strength to try again.
The Jordan’s waters cleansed my soul.
I left her banks forever whole.
My Lord resisted temptation and sin.

My Lord overcame the cruelest death.
My Lord fills me with His breath.
When I popped out of the Jordan’s dark,
I felt the heat of an eternal spark.
My Lord overcame the cruelest death.
My Lord shines glory on creation.
My Lord lights the fire of inspiration.
I sank below the Jordan without a fight
And came back up in eternal light.
My Lord shines glory on creation.

III. Communion

Down to the Galilee we trod
a single line of white flesh.
One too old, another too hoarse.
He’s dimwitted. He’s judgmental.
She’s a peacock. He’s hen-pecked.
I’m too stupid, cruel, and lost.

The Galilee’s a hard mirror to face,
So deep and holy and awesome.
I’ll cling to its shore, hold back from its edge
Where it’s safer for us cripples.
Sorrow’s acid melts my heart.
There’s a hole where muscle once beat.
What have I done? Look what I’ve become.
I can’t stand to see.
In the green marsh beyond our church,
a stately egret watches.

Ah, you are here, and you'll be with me always.
We have this body. We have this blood.
Filled again, in time, with peace and love.

When I dream of consolation,
I see the pristine Galilee
And one great white bird lifting off the shore
to soar in its own reflection.

IV. Ascent

Mountains all call the same question.
Come, will you? Come.

Beacons born of fire
Like lighthouses of a certain sea.
Still us. Draw us.

Pull our souls right out our eyes.
Grow our spirits large.
Then wrap us in the blanket of our selves.