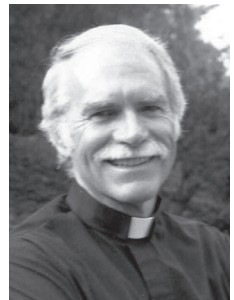


Walking with Merton toward the Buddha

By **J. T. Ledbetter**

The grass is cool and sweet under bare feet,
 the heart slows under the shadow of the great Buddha
 and the face we imagined as babies as our face,
 hidden and known in memory and imagination
 since birth-breath and primal scream, already searching
 for the secret of the smile known in the mystic-bath of the mother,
 knowing before birth became breath, where all is given once
 and forever without speech to frame the upwelling seas
 and breath of flowers washing against us as we wait for sound/
 movement/touch telling us this grass is sweet and cool beneath
 bare feet and that soul knows truth is, love is – and the center
 we call ourselves is the center of the other breathing with us,
 the smile, the promise of the womb, the eyes of our eyes opening now . . .

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