

AWAKENING AND MATURITY FOR SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS

The graphics for Genjo Marinello's new book "Reflections on Awakening and Maturity for Spiritual Companions" (just out on SDI Press) are meant to invoke the Japanese art of Kintsugi ("golden joinery"), a process whereby broken items are carefully seamed back together with gold. The results are prized for their aesthetic value, as a celebration of "wabi-sabi," or the inherent beauty in the flaws and imperfections of an object. But the concept extends more broadly into a generalized acceptance of impermanence, imbued with serene melancholy and spiritual longing.

What a perfect analogy for anyone on a spiritual path!

In this book, Genjo Marinello reveals his own journey through brokenness and repair, bravely and generously, allowing us all to read ourselves into him. After all, who among us hasn't struggled with trauma and loss? And despair when we can't seem to find our way through?

All of this is the province of spiritual companions, and Genjo expertly shows us how to move forward, not just through his insights as a long time spiritual director, but also in his roles as a psychotherapist, and, perhaps most significantly, as a Zen Master (or "Roshi"). Who better to help us discern our path than someone who has dedicated his life to doing his own deep work for the sake of others?

continued on next page



The book chronicles this lifelong and ongoing commitment, through thick and thin, as well as a courageous embrace of many difficulties, shortcomings and flaws.

Genjo composts all of these into assets, establishing them as the building blocks for his own ongoing spiritual growth and evolution. And by extension, for ours.

In the process, he engages with numerous spiritual companions and models, most notably the Buddha, St Teresa of Avila, and the Zen Oxherding pictures. They reveal insights and challenges both easy and joyful, along with some quite hard and painful.

As Genjo often says, “every day is a new beginning,” and a new opportunity for us to become our better selves. But that doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy.

Indeed, one of the more arresting conclusions of the book is that even after we awaken spiritually, we are all still a mixed bag, with shining moments, less flattering ones, and some where we fall far short of the mark. Awakening,

he argues, does not mean spiritual maturity, as counterintuitive as this may seem. So, we get on with the hard work of continuously reconstructing ourselves, with our wounds and scars acknowledged and visible to us and to our spiritual companions, who help support us, gently and tenderly, as we rebuild ourselves from our broken constituent pieces.

This book is itself a loving form of spiritual companionship, as Genjo shares his story and becomes a model for us all in how to turn pain, loss and trauma into the necessary fertilizer for spiritual growth and maturity.



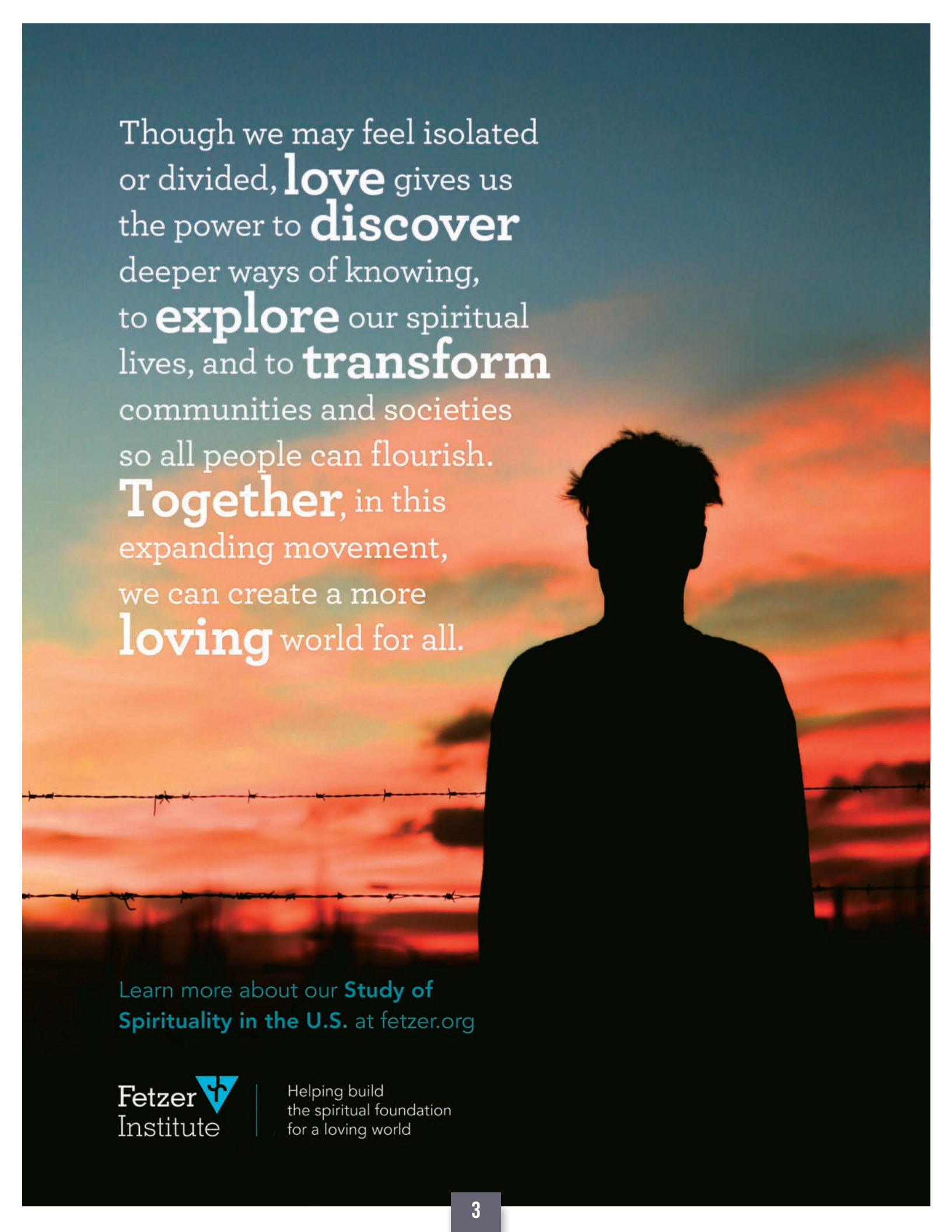
Warmly,
Rev. SeiFu Anil Singh-Molares



HOW SHALL WE
PROCEED?

NO KNOWING.

LET'S INVESTIGATE
TOGETHER.

A silhouette of a person stands in the foreground, looking out over a landscape. In the background, there is a vibrant sunset or sunrise with orange and red clouds. Two strands of barbed wire are visible in the foreground, stretching across the frame.

Though we may feel isolated
or divided, **love** gives us
the power to **discover**
deeper ways of knowing,
to **explore** our spiritual
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EXCERPTS FROM REFLECTIONS ON AWAKENING & MATURITY FOR SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS



“Awakening alone is only a foothold on the endless path of maturation. If we aren’t always beginning just where we are, we have been sidetracked into arrogance, ignorance or spiritual bypassing.”

“Spiritual practices nurture our roots and help us have access to the sun. Psychological practices work best with everything between our roots and the sun. Of course, a healthy tree needs nurturing on all levels. A healthy tree serves the forest and the world. Every healthy tree is an actualized bodhisattva naturally caring for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. A tree naturally does its part for the forest, not more than its part and not less than its part. Staying healthy and balanced is the best way to serve the forest of humans and this troubled world. A tree that is sickly or broken, and yet has achieved psychological maturity with deep roots may still serve by being served, or if dead, serve as a nurse log for the next generation of trees.”

“Spiritual companions are the best resource possible when it comes to dealing with the fear and the dark nights that we all face from time to time. Spiritual companions provide a bridge from our fear to beyond fear. They offer a mirror to our deep-rooted nature.

“No one can grow and learn for us; however, our teachers may suggest what to explore, and may point to what we can’t know but can learn to feel. What they mustn’t do is give us the answers we are looking for. On the other hand, there is no harm done when our teachers leave cairns along the paths they have explored so that we may explore them for ourselves.”

“The path towards individuation, awakening and maturity is impossible without companions. For better and worse our maturation depends on our relationship to significant family members, teachers, and mentors. If we are lucky, we will find spiritual guides that mirror our shortcomings, are honest about their own, and point the way towards tapping wisdom and expressing compassion. A big part of any spiritual companion relationship is assessing where we are in our own unfolding spiritual journey, where we have been and where we may need to deepen or explore.”



Reflections on Awakening & Maturity for Spiritual Companions, *from SDI Press, is now available for purchase.*

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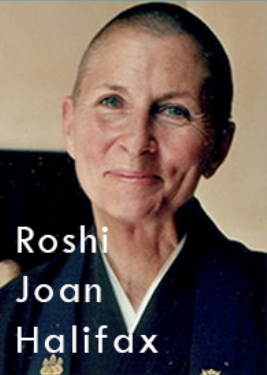
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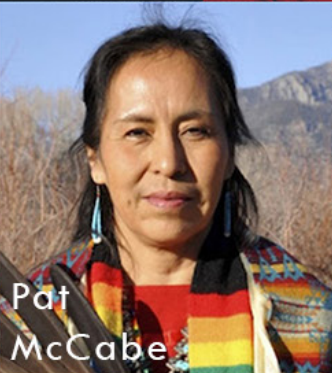
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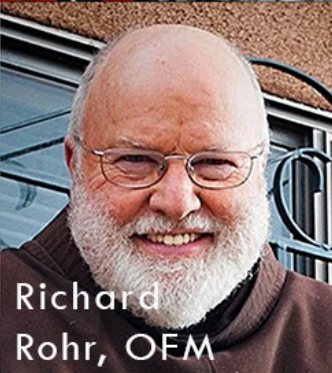
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SHADOWS OF LIGHT IN DARKNESS

Once strong arms reveal sturdy bones beneath the wasted flesh
- skin now foreign -
textured, tanned and stained.

A version of my father's face and jaw
- translucent now and angular -
inexplicably pasted on his near-spent body.

Two sparkling dark raisin eyes fasten on my lips as I speak.
He's all there. Witness:

his curious look
quick laugh
impish glance
quicksilver retort;

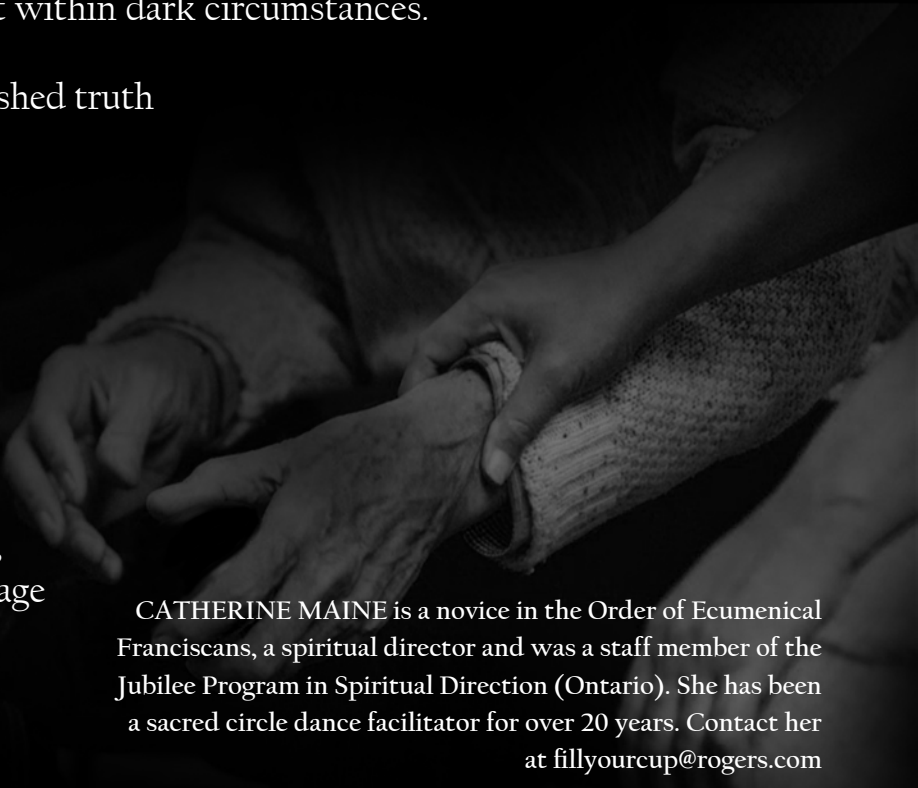
his customary attention to others with
a knowing nod
understanding shrug
and dignified acceptance.

And now, fully rendered:
his willingness to find shadows of light within dark circumstances.

He is the one who asks for the unvarnished truth
quietly appraises
and chooses without drama -
thereby freeing himself and
liberating others.

My father:
wholly constituted
a treasured inspiration.

(Written as my father, Samuel Pollock,
learned that he had terminal cancer at age
87. August 2019)



CATHERINE MAINE is a novice in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, a spiritual director and was a staff member of the Jubilee Program in Spiritual Direction (Ontario). She has been a sacred circle dance facilitator for over 20 years. Contact her at fillyourcup@rogers.com

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Article appears in the January 14, 2021 issue of

The New York Times

Featuring comments by SDI's Executive Director
Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares



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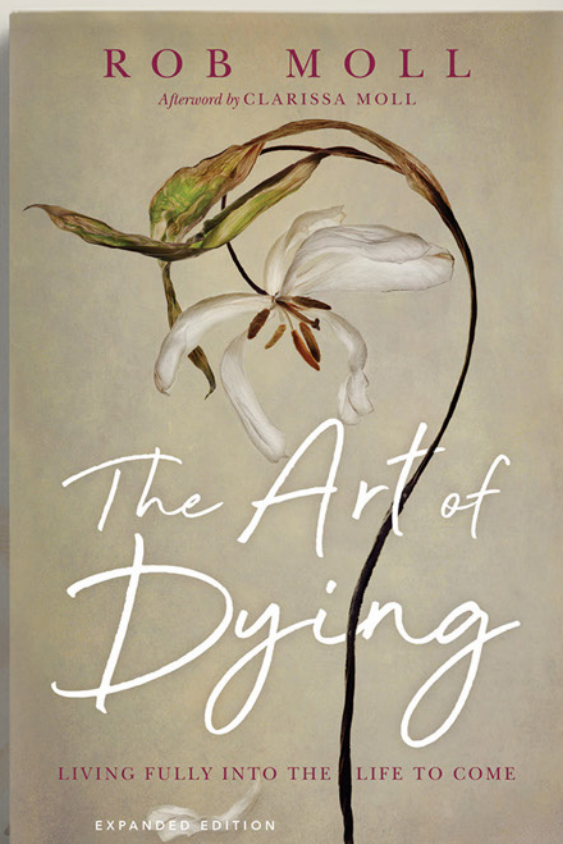
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ROB MOLL (1977–2019) was an award-winning journalist and the author of *The Art of Dying* and *What Your Body Knows About God*. He served on the staff of *Christianity Today* for nearly sixteen years.



CLARISSA MOLL is the widow of Rob and the mother of their four children. Her writing on grief has appeared in *Modern Loss*, *Practical Homeschooling*, *The Gospel Coalition*, and *Christianity Today*.

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A GENUINE GESTURE

he kept the card on his desk for years, the one
that said, "Thank you."

thought it had gone
unnoticed

the slow-moving current
of gratitude

often imperceptible

Dayna E. Mazzuca recently published her seventh book of poems, *Approach*—now available online. Her stand-alone poems have appeared in *Presence*, *Prairie Journal*, *Island Writer*, *Transition*, *Mental Health Journal*, *Crux* and *The Prairie Messenger*. She reads aloud on her site www.daynamazzuca.com and brings a background in spiritual formation, community journalism and political philosophy to the page.




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"A LUMINOUS GUIDE FOR COMPANIONS" - MIRABAI STARR

REFLECTIONS ON AWAKENING & MATURITY FOR SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS

A Zen Master and Quaker, a spiritual companion/director and psychotherapist, Genjo is above all, a wisdom teacher. He has lived the arc of suffering, awakening and maturity that he writes about in this book.

Spiritual companions, spiritual directors, and all interested in a life of spirit, will benefit from reading Genjo's chronicle of breaking apart and growing, healing and becoming whole.



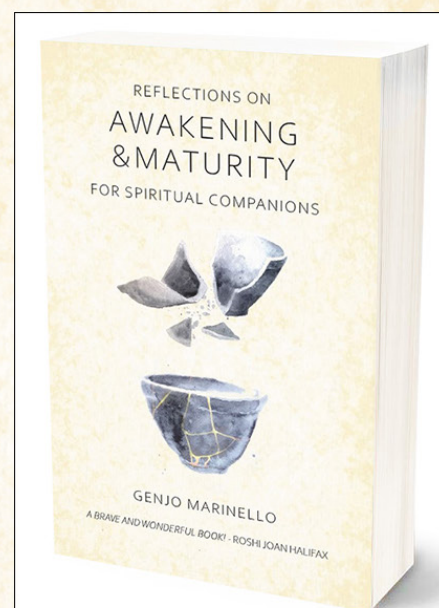
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with all-pervading universal life"*

Enso by Sōen Nakagawa Roshi (1907-1984)



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