



When the days are very hot we don't open our windows until there is a cool breeze during the night. These same days are times of heavy work for others in our little community and they need their rest. So it often is my delightful task to stumble about or roll along in the wheelchair during the night hours opening some of the windows.

This takes me, and any of you who find yourself up in the hours of the night, to performing the task of monks through the ages who would arise at night to pray on behalf of the sleeping world. Often I find myself remembering, and occasionally reciting, the opening phrase of the nocturnal service of Vigils which translates some-

thing like; *“Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise”*.

To me, there are several unique things about contemplation at night be it opening windows or sitting beside the sick-bed of someone we love, or just being awake for no apparent reason. First, we transcend our personal preoccupations. In these quiet hours we sense our connection to all of humanity; those in fear, mourning, struggling as refugees, hungry, laboring under the burdens of being young —or old —or alone. The curtains separating us from others seem to part one after another.

And there is something else about being the “designated night watcher.” During the day I look out and observe things. But at night something turns me inward. If I see a car on the road at noon it is just that, a car on the road, but a light in the darkness leads me inward to the story in the car. The sight of the stars pulls me into something beyond my comprehension yet strangely familiar.

I am not really alone as I open the windows and feel the breeze. There is the sleepy-eyed cat at the end of the hall patiently waiting for me to remember that nighttime is for sleeping. And, most important, there is the frog in the rose garden who is tonight’s cantor as he intones his version of:

“Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise”.

Brother Toby