
THE GUEST HOUSE

By Jelaluddin Rumi (born 30 September 1207; died 17 December 1273)¹.

NOTES

In an account of Rumi's life by his contemporary translator Coleman Barks, found in the Introduction to his translations of Rumi's poetry called *The Soul of Rumi: a New Collection of Ecstatic Poems* (2001), we read: "The thirteenth century in the Near East was a time of tremendous political turmoil and war: the Christian military expedition called "crusades" continued to set out from the European west across the Anatolian peninsula [Rumi's family had finally settled in Anatolia; that is, on the high central plateau of western Turkey, in the town of Konya], and from the east the inexorable Mongol armies rode down from the Asian steppes.... It was also a time of brilliant mystical awareness, when the lives of three of the world's great lovers of God's presence in humanity, and in existence itself, overlapped: St. Francis of Assisi, OFM² (1182-1226) at the beginning of the century, Meister Eckhart, OP³ (1260-1328) at the end, and Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) at the center. They were all magnificently surrendered souls, and wonderful creators of language.... Rumi was born near the city of Balkh, in what is now Afghanistan, then the western edge of the Persian Empire, on 30 September 1207. He was the descendant of a long line of Islamic jurists, theologians, and mystics."

THE POEM

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

¹ Jelaluddin Rumi was an almost exact contemporary of Saint Thomas Aquinas, OP (1225-1274) and of Saint Bonaventure, OFM (1221-1274).

² OFM is an acronym for "Order of Friars Minor" (or "Franciscan" for short), which is the Religious Order of priests and sisters that has its source in the life and example of St. Francis of Assisi.

³ OP is the acronym for the "Order of Preachers" (or "Dominicans" for short), which is the Religious Order of priests and sisters that has its source in the life and example of St. Dominic (1170-1221).

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture, still,
treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.