

The Highest Art

The Art of Combining Traditional Consciousness Techniques with
Advancing Consciousness Technologies in Sacred Psychedelic Practice

By Brother Andrew H...

*La gloria di colui che tutto move
per l'universo penetra, e risplende
in una parte più e meno altrove.
Nel ciel che più de la sua luce prende
fu' o, e vidi cose che ridire
ne sa ne puo chi di la su discende...*

-Saint Dante

The last twenty years of the last millennium I've lived largely in Catholic monasteries secretly using the sacred psychedelic, LSD-25, as part of my private spiritual practice. One could also say that as part of my sacred psychedelic practice, I used the monastic spiritual traditions. Either way, the fact is, the combination brings to light the best in both, and in truth, that best is the same in each one.

Now, as I look at that picture of the interior of the church that the monks themselves built at the monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, and I reflect on some of the more than one hundred-fifty beautiful, planned, sacred, psychedelic sessions that I enjoyed in and around that church and the monk mind-field, I'd like to order up a whole googplex of sacred "flashbacks".

I arrived at the monastery in 1980, at the end of a two week fast, no food and minimal water. Before eating, I took some of the sacred psychedelic and surveyed the situation. Among other things, I realized that Trappist monasticism warranted some in-depth spiritual exploration and psychedelic evaluation, giving it the acid test. I wanted to see and hear everything so I got high for everything except work. As I worked primarily in the stained glass studio, I think that was prudent.

Chanting in choir is a duty that is remarkably elevating, to say the least, and would leave me wishing it would go on for hours. I usually timed my psychedelic sessions to start in the evening, so that I would still be high, but not too high, when I got to my choir stall at 4:00 AM. Lectio Divina, a type of solitary reading aimed at inspiration that we did from 5:30 AM to 6:30 AM, is a practice peculiar to Benedictine monasticism. Applying this in sacred psychedelic practice, during the early central phase of a session, is a matter of focusing one's eyes and consciousness on sacred scripture and reading aloud or to oneself. This will definitely broaden one's scope as one penetrates the hidden mystical meaning of "The Word". This technique is one of the greatest gifts of the Benedictine tradition. Praying the rosary, a discursive type of meditation that was optional and took place at various times, is kind of a tight discipline for a psychedelic mind, especially when done with a group of monks and visitors, but staying with it paid off in mind-blowing revelations into the mysteries. There is all this and so much more, up to and including the beauty of participation in the liturgical ritual of the Mass,

which at a monastery proceeds at a pace which is slow and punctuated with meditative pauses, and is rather attuned to reflection.

Of course, some of my sessions were not all that smooth and easy - especially at the beginning of the early eighties when I was trying to get a handle on preparation and timing. Sometimes things would get awkward and occasionally somewhat difficult.

I remember one time especially. It was Christmas Eve, 1983. I always got "high" on the High Holidays, so I prepared for Midnight Mass by cleaning up and going to confession (very helpful) and fasting for the day, etc. About two hours before midnight, I took two hundred fifty micrograms. Well, when I walked into the church at midnight I was feeling very awkward indeed. I was thinking that I had taken too much, or too much too late, or something. It was intense, and an extra large crowd of visitors had come to celebrate with the monks. Oh no, all this fidgeting and the amplified rustling sounds of strange synthetic materials, little whisperings. Wait, "Remember the teachings". Meditate, breathe, breathe. Ugh, the smells of perfumes mixing in the air...breathe?

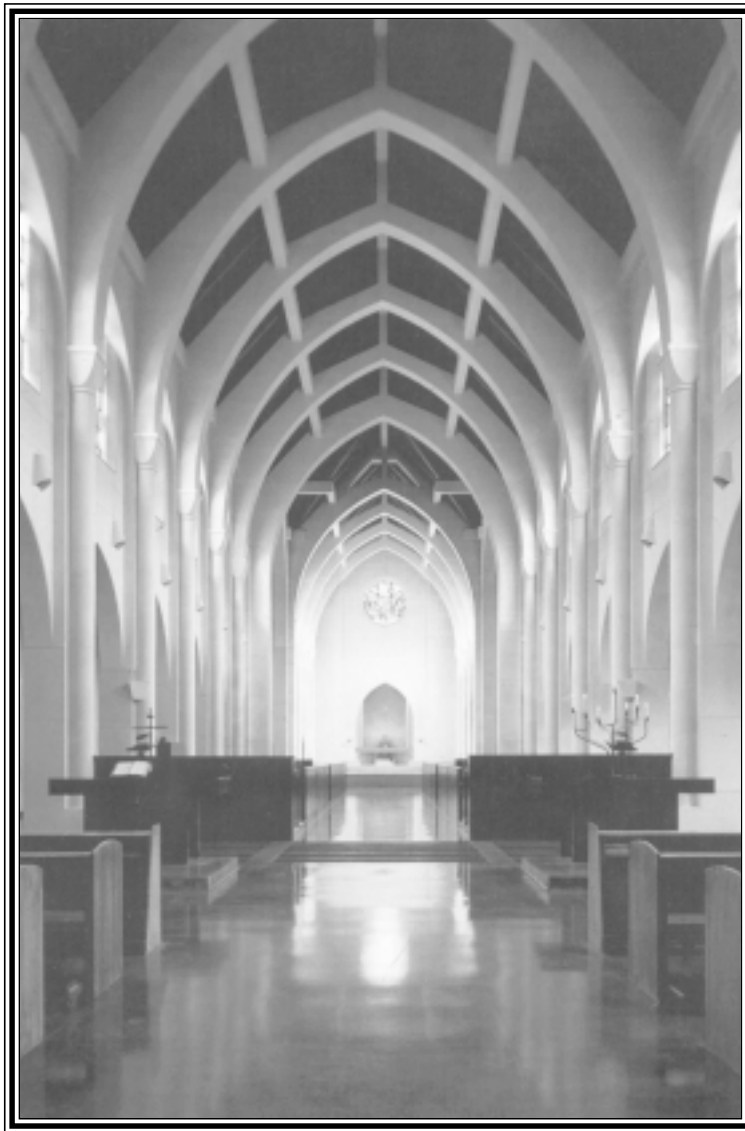
Midnight Mass at a monastery is usually long and very beautiful, and after what seemed like a very, very long time it was finally time to receive communion. At last, thank God, it's almost over. Feeling very uncomfortable and self-conscious, I bowed my head - like monks are supposed to do anyhow - got in line feeling kind of stiff and mechanical, moved along towards...Father Joachim.

I was gazing down at his sandals when I heard him saying, "Brother Andrew, Body of Christ". As I looked up, he was holding up the consecrated bread as though he was showing it to me. He had this gentle smile, and his face was absolutely beaming with joy, and love and camaraderie. His eyes, his eyes were twinkling, really twinkling,

and in that instant, even before he placed the consecrated host in my hand, in the twinkling of an eye, everything was transformed. Transfused with a special kind of light that seemed to softly light up the air and even seemed to light up the light itself. And suddenly...it was Christmas! And a glorious and blessed one at that. Thank you again, venerable Father Joachim, for that gift, wherever you are. And that, in truth, is what happened. Yes. And it went on and on, and anyone who knew Father Joachim knows that he did things like that.

Incidentally, the late (saint) Father Joachim was guestmaster at the Ab-

bey of Our Lady of Gethsemane in Kentucky when the late (saint) Thomas Merton entered the novitiate there. It was Merton's written work, particularly *Ascent to Truth* and *Seeds of Contemplation*, that led me to check out the Trappists. And now, after reading all of his (fifty plus) published books, some of his unpublished work, and listening to many of his unedited taped conferences, I can safely say that not only was he a mystic, but also that he was definitely curious about LSD-25, that he was open to its possibilities, and, I suspect, that he probably "experimented" with it. I think that is to his credit. I think he was a saint.



OUR LADY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now at this point a few things should be made perfectly clear:

1) I don't consider secret psychedelic practice any more reprehensible than the secret practice of Christianity by the early Christians living under a reign of persecution. What is reprehensible is persecution - especially in a country like ours where freedom of worship was constitutionally guaranteed in the Bill of Rights from the beginning.

2) I don't refer to sacred psychedelics as "drugs", and I don't refer to the Body and Blood of Christ as "Bread and Booze". And I know it's not right (generally) to consider either in the context of substance abuse.

3) Please note that though I was conducting these sessions right "under the noses" of the monks, I did manage to conduct myself responsibly and (contrary to a lot of sensational media coverage regarding psychedelics) never once did I "freak out" or "flip out" or have to be talked down, tranquilized, hospitalized, or whatever.

If you've read this far, you may be asking, who is this guy? Who is this person? Well, I like asking myself that same question. "Who am I?" Matter of fact that's one of my favorite questions. "Who am I?" Now, with all due respect to Saint Salvador Dali, I will answer like this:

The three best things that can happen to a person in this life are:

1) To hit the jackpot in prayer, i.e., to be elevated to the supernatural vision of the essence of being.

2) To be a pioneer in the ultimate frontier of art- high art- the sacred art of getting high, and in truth, turning towards the essence of being.

3) To be known as Brother Andrew H..., a.k.a. Mahatma.

Fortunately these three things have happened to me and I am grateful. Among the maxims on Lord Naoshige's wall there was this one: "Matters of great concern should be treated lightly." That's from the *Hagakure*. The Book of the Samurai.

Now it is the second of the "three best things" that is the theme of this here little disquisition - the high art of combining traditional consciousness techniques with advancing consciousness technologies in sacred psyche-

delic practice, to the proximate end that, in this life, the best minds will be inclined to turn and strive towards

absolute unitude. "You propose a high and mighty art indeed," one may say. Yes, even the venerable saint Socrates only speculated that there "might be such an art" and what it might be like, in the cave parable in *The*

"I usually timed my psychedelic sessions to start in the evening, so that I would still be high, but not too high, when I got to my choir stall at 4:00 AM."

Republic.

As meditation -- controlling one's mind -- is integral to the life of a person on a psychedelic journey as it is to a person on a monastic journey, and since I was on the path where these two converge, I quickly realized how inept I was at this "vague" thing called meditation. The very thing that seems to distinguish Eastern traditions from Western traditions is actually alive and ongoing (though almost hidden from the mainstream) in some Western monastic orders. But, the fact is, the teaching of meditation in both the East and the West has been pretty much an inefficient, trial and error sort of thing, taking a long time. Most people who bother to start end up dropping it anyway, even if they have charismatic teachers and read the best books on the subject.

This is where the marriage of meditation and electroencephalograph (EEG) monitoring technology comes in. Anyone who really wants to learn how to meditate can go to someplace like the Anna Wise Center in Marin County, and with their technology -they use the Mind Mirror III - and their knowledge of meditative brainwave patterns, one can learn or improve more in ten days than in ten years elsewhere. That may be an exaggeration, but it is only a slight one. The point is, that with the use of EEG monitoring, one can learn to meditate quickly, easily, and enjoy the process of learning it at the same time. Just verifying the fact that one is meditating can be quite validating. One can also learn how to deepen one's meditations, and further on one can learn how to use these mind machines to help others. On one level that's what this marriage of technology and meditation is all about.

Picture if you will, some progressive novice master speaking to a novice monk at their weekly "conference" sometime in the near future. "Hmm, Brother Ellipsis, looking at these printouts of your brain rhythm patterns

from last week, it is evident that the depth of your “meditatio” has increased considerably. It seems that just that element of “relaxing your tongue”, and thereby disconnecting the thoughts and giving the thinking mind a rest, has reduced beta rhythms. What I see here looks real good. Might want to practice that this week too. Maybe see more improvement in controlling the mind. OK. Then, if you’re ready, now let’s get hooked up to this new little portable unit here and give it a go...but first, as usual, let us begin with a prayer.

“Father,
May our words
And the “meditatio” of
our hearts
Be acceptable
In your sight. [...Psalm 19]
We ask this
In the spirit of truth
And in the name of your
son
Jesus, the anointed one.
Amen.”

OK, now we come to one of the high points of this article, and this here is my attempt to rescue psychedelics from the limbo to which they have been temporarily (and rightfully so) consigned by the general public. What follows is a contribution to the psychedelic transpersonal community.

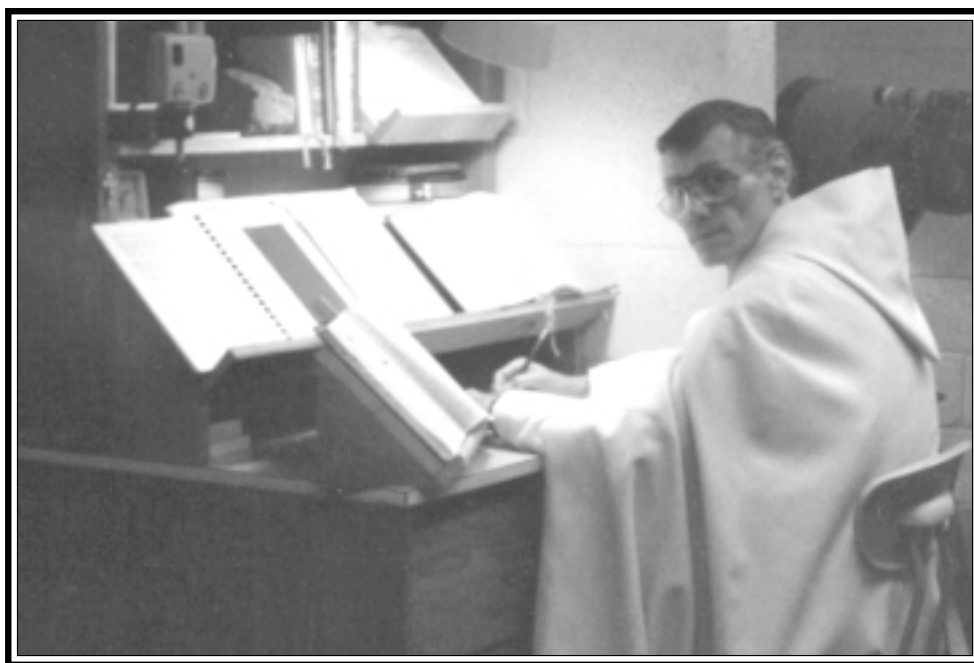
We know that “set”, as in “set and setting”, is one of the important factors in the context of a psychedelic session. We know that brain activity is altered by external stimuli. We have technologies that can quickly and easily activate specific brain states. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that we learn to apply, like salve, the appropriate technologies to psychedelic sessions. During the preparation, for example, one can establish a healthy meditation brain wave pattern using binaural beat technology. In the entry phase, sustain that pattern. In the central phase, maintain and perhaps imprint, not a doctrine but a known, non-verbal optimal performance brain rhythm pattern. In the

re-entry phase, maintain and support that pattern. In the immediate post-session follow-up, reinforce, etc.

...From before the beginning.....

...Until after the end.....

...The skillful, loving application of the salve of certain known good binaural mind rhythm combinations can, in truth, definitely, nonverbally, help improve and sometimes even beatify a psychedelic session in a good setting.



BROTHER ANDREW H...

“I don’t consider secret psychedelic practice any more reprehensible than the secret practice of Christianity by the early Christians living under a reign of persecution.”

Also, in the context of set and setting, there’s this fundamental thing about music. All psychedelic people know how very important the selection of music is to a session, but only some realize that all music drives brainwaves. One may want to go back and carefully check out (via EEG monitoring) exactly what brainwave states some of that music is (probably unwittingly) generating, especially if one, or anyone around one, is having difficult “trips”. Seriously! Now, we have access to readily available metamusic - music that is artistically and technologically designed with certain complex binaural frequency

patterns imbedded in the music in order to generate, activate, or access specific brain states — the implications and possibilities here are really big, especially if one is seriously considering a safe design (protocol) for a psychedelic (research) session.

What is being suggested here is establishing a fair degree of external control of the “action potential” of the internal electrochemical signaling system of rapidly firing neurons. In effect, both filing a flight plan and adding a guidance system that can help enable one to navigate into appropriate mind states. From here one can handle arising content like a proverbial Zen master - and even better. Considering that all one is adding are some appropriately designed recordings of precision sound frequencies to a stereo system with good speaker separation, or headphones, it is a fairly easy thing to do. This can be positively beneficial in a psychedelic session especially during that phase when the cognitive faculties lose dominance. Then, even advanced meditators may find that relaxing into the comforting support of a good recorded meditative brainwave net may be the best Bon Voyage thing to do.

Flashback. One time when I was really high (I find myself saying that a lot) meditating, in a crowd at Gusman Philharmonic Hall in Miami, before a Brahms double-header, this guy came in all spastic, legs wobbling, head bobbing, arms flopping about, and sat down and continued bobbling around in his seat — right in my field of vision. “Uh-oh,” I thought, “this guy’s gonna be entirely too distracting.” But when the concert began, something amazing happened. Sometime within the first few minutes of the first movement, his movement settled down. His body came to rest, and he was still. At first, my mind began to glide with the music. Now I usually don’t have to try hard to discipline my thinking mind if I’m sitting, listening in a symphonic mind-field. But I had to think about this. This is physical! What’s going on here? Let’s see. Observe. There’s one distinct set of sound waves extending from the violin section of the orchestra all the way to my left ear and on to my olivary nuclei...and another somewhat separate set extending from the viola/cello section to my right ear and olivary nuclei. The combination was making one single overriding pulsing pattern that was lighting up a whole higher network throughout my entire brain (looking into one’s

own mind-brain is resting in the Buddha mind). Wow, neural communication! To the max! Making for smooth sailing in my mind and, what’s more, actual physical therapeutic neural control in his formerly spasming body, enabling him to sit perfectly still. The implications were as clear as the waves of sound in front of my eyes... focusing...sound waves...stimulating therapeutic neural communications. Aha! It was so obvious. Beautiful.

Naturally, I checked some of this stuff out back in the laboratory about an hour away from the monastery. It was anecdotal work, but somebody had to do it. It was very interesting looking at a color monitor and seeing, in real time, the motion of a compressed spectral array of my baseline brainwave pattern. After meditation, I was able to glance up at the monitor and see both hemispheres perfectly synchronized.

And later, I was amazed to see how swiftly psychedelic consciousness responds to binaural frequencies, and to photic (strobe) entrainment too. And wow! Yes!

“...one can establish a healthy meditation brain wave pattern using binaural beat technology.”

Vestibular stuff! And further...more...hmmm... yes...this is real...good.

One could design a session that would be so nice, so smooth, that one could become accustomed to being...so...yes. It’s a whole new psychedelic ball game now, but the ideas are the same as ever. Just as in meditation, LEARN TO CONTROL ONE’S OWN MIND, brainwaves if you will. (Unless of course one is leaving that up to someone or something else). And the ancient message is the same. THE ESSENCE IS LOVE...THAT’S TRUE.

Now we have these new tools along with the old tools that can, in truth, if we use them wisely, help us to transcend, maybe even actually know (and this is supremely important) absolute unitude...which is the one...prerequisite...for subsequent true self-transformation.

If one is already a psychedelic person and wants to check some of these ideas out, for starters one can call up, or dot com, the Monroe Institute in Faber, Virginia, for binaural stuff; or the Anna Wise Center in Larkspur, California, for the marriage of mediation and technology stuff; or Jeff Labno at Tools for Wellness in Chatsworth, California, for one stop shopping for the whole array of mind tools. And if you do try this stuff at home, please, be

responsible. These are some powerful combinations. There are three things that are not in the books yet that happen sometimes that make the re-entry phase very important.

1) Some people get so high, so smoothly, and get so accustomed to the brightness and clarity and seeing into the mysteries, that they don't want to come down...and when they do, they start to be disappointed.

2) Some people have gotten so high that they actually thought that they would never come down, but they did. And they were disappointed, too, to find out that all phases of consciousness, no matter how transformative, are transient in this life. Such is life itself.

3) The more spiritually mature sometimes get so high that when they come down they immediately start getting themselves together so that when it happens again they can stay there longer. In the meantime, if they love their neighbors as themselves, they set about to share this with them.

Yes, all three of these things have happened to me. That is why I suggest this: Please, be responsible and remember that the re-entry phase is real important here. For what it's worth, I recommend prolonging the session as long as possible through meditation, which is real easy for a psychedelic mind supported by recorded binaural meditation rhythms. Just relax into it.

Meanwhile, back at the monastery, it was a warm early summer evening in 1986, and the time was ripe for another secret sacred psychedelic session. That day, while in the library, I had found a little paperback book entitled, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries*, which I read while I was going about the monastic horarium and making my usual "preparations." After Compline (night prayer) I took a "power nap" and 'round midnight I got up, dosed (about 500 micrograms) and laid back down for a smooth lift-off. I knew it was going to be a big one when I heard those electric buzzing beeping sounds moving around in my auditory system. When I hear that I know it's really coming on. It was about an hour later when, totally unintentionally, my mind suddenly went transpersonal...through the floor and the walls down and directly into Dom Armand's (the abbot then) sleeping mind/brain. He woke up startled at the sudden brightness. Oops, I thought, I'm outta here. As quickly as my mind had slipped out of my body...it was back. Whew! That was a close one. Don't want to blow my cover, got to get my trip together.

The church...just one floor down and a few steps over and I'd be in the back of the church. I can negotiate that! For further silence and solitude, I went into the Confessional and sat to meditate in the dark of the confessional,, in the dark of the church, in the dark of the night. When I finally settled my breathing into a good rhythm, that book, *The Road to Eleusis*, came to my mind. What was that weird hermaphrodite thing that had been mentioned? From the depths of that thought something subtle started. Gradually, I became aware that each cell in my entire body was orgasmically connected with each and all the surrounding cells. My whole electric cellular being was...yes...yes...yes...yi! It continued like that for about an hour and then, very gradually, it subsided and was gone. Then, sitting there in the stillness, a new episode began. My bladder was tense. I had to go to the bathroom. It seemed so far away...and what if I run into a monk? I'm too high for that! But I had to go so I began making my way slowly through the bright darkness, through the thick molecular air, along the full length of the nave of the church, along the aisle behind the choir stalls, on the abbot's side, slowly, softly, toward the door that leads to the east side of the cloister garden. I was stopping every six or seven steps, listening. "Now, the ears of my ears awake..." Crickets. The shrill sound of male cicadas, sirens twenty-three miles away in downtown Conyers. Then, through the door and along the east cloister garth, stopping, listening. Somebody flushed a toilet back over in the guest house. Some monk just turned off a faucet on the second floor, on the south side of the cloister, walked to his room, and closed the door. Silence. Past the chapter room, through the next door into the south wing of the cloister and down to the first landing, listening. . . I can hear for twenty-five miles now. One last check, stopping in front of the bulletin board, seven steps away from the Grand Parlor (which adjoins the lavatory). Almost there, I listen...all's quiet...ahh. All the monks are sound asleep. Just seven or eight steps and I'll be...and from out of nowhere, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, the sound of robes whooshing, and from around the corner of the Grand Parlor, the five hundred microgram beam from the face of...superconscious Father Joachim...walking. How did he do that? I can hear forever! He just walked on by, head bowed, beaming and smiling to himself. Of course, he didn't say a word, as monks don't speak during the Grand Silence of the night. I was speechless...mind blown, wondering: How did he do that? He looks as high as I am.

He's not high on acid. No, he can't be, but...almost forgot where I was going.

'Took me years to come up with an explanation. It could have been that he was "hiding", just around the corner of the doorway, in a corner, praying...I'd inadvertently discovered venerable Father Francis Xavier "hiding" in different places, praying along the way, when I was going one place or another to do something. Those venerable old ones have some amazing ways. But still, though many years have passed, sometimes I wonder, since I could hear for twenty-five miles, how did he just appear like that? How did he get so high?

Looking over the years now, it's no big wonder that with the secret psychedelic life that I was living, even with all the many years in monasteries, I never became a thoroughbred monk. Now, I am just a self-professed hermit monk, not associated with any particular Order, living in the high (of course) desert, peacefully, in silence, and solitude. I still venture into "the world" occasionally. I like some of the music I hear, and some of the ideas floating around, and some of the things I see being done to make it a better world. As a matter of fact, try this on for size. An awakened mind-brain rhythm pattern being generated binaurally between musical acts at a festival, with all that big stereo equipment already set up and psychedelically sensitized audiences of thousands. Alleluia! Let 'em all try on an awakened mind and see, in truth, how nice it really is. Certainly with that help the best minds will be strengthened, and then they won't need any of those politicians or spiritual hucksters out to "save the world". They'll be able to just go on and do it themselves...and a lot more than that, too.

These generations could possibly turn out to be the most illuminated of all time...and not only "save the world", but ILLUMINATE ALL LIFE, and transform all existence. A bit much you think? What about the Second Coming? Be all that as it may, please allow this exercise to stand as an illustration of the high art of appropriating science to the sacred and combining them so as to bring out the best that is within. Now that's real art. That is high art.

Please remember, the first best thing that can happen to someone in this life is to be elevated to the supernatural vision of the essence of being. Well, when that happens, and in truth it does happen from time to time, one might call it a masterpiece. Sometime, somewhere, when you least expect it, that masterpiece might well be you.

Definitely you in all your glory in God's infinite majesty. And your Self will be the inspiration that all works of art are meant to be.

And with that, I'm just gonna go outside now and watch the early dawn Venus rise...and Jupiter is up there...and Saturn (the home planet of Dante's contemplatives), now between the horns of Taurus, the bull.

So please, if you will,
Let us, in the spirit of truth,
Pray for one another,
The highest prayer:
That we
May be one

With the Father,
In unitude,
Enjoyment,
And beatitude
In the essence
Of love.

Who am I?
Bro. Andrew H...
Thank you.

Amen.
Selah