

**Into the Sacred**  
Reflection for Celtic Eventide  
St. Alban's, Cape Elizabeth, Maine  
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About two years ago, my husband and I adopted a dog. Since she's a rescue we don't really know that much about her history, but our vet thinks that she is between 3 and 4 years-old, and a mix between a Doberman and a Beagle. Trust me, it's adorable. She looks like a smaller Doberman, but with the ears of a Beagle and makes the soft "woo-woo-woo" sounds of a hound. Her colors are chocolate and tan, and we named her Tucson after the city where my husband's family grew up.

It is fitting that we named her after a desert town because Tucson hates the water. She's scared of it. When, after coaxing failed, we carried her into my parents' pool, she had an absolute meltdown. When we took her to the beach and she saw my sister's golden retriever happily splashing around, Tucson frantically ran back and forth as if to say, "somebody help him! He doesn't know what he's doing!!"

Tucson may hate the water, but she's obsessed with my husband Alex. I'm the one who walks her most of the time, I'm the one that feeds her. But it's when Alex comes home that she loses her mind with pure puppy joy. I think it's because she knows my farm boy husband just loves animals from deep in his bones...he's just one of those animal people. I love my dog, but Alex *gets* my dog, and she knows it.

So this past Wednesday afternoon, we took her on the cliff walk at Prouts Neck. And when we got to one of those gorgeous, rocky beaches, we decided to try again. Alex took off his sneakers and waded in about knee deep, and then he called Tucson to himself.

You could see the struggle playing out on her little doggy face. She hates the water, but she loves Alex. So each time a wave went out she would bound toward him, but then each time a wave came back in, she would backpedal as if she'd encountered a snake. I sat on the beach and watched her do this over and over again. Run toward Alex, run away from the water. Run toward Alex, run away from the water. One time she even leaned over and took a little lick of the sea water and the utter disgust on her face was priceless. And Alex, with endless patience, kept gently calling her, inviting her to move past her fear.

It was a perfect little moment; full of sunshine and salt air and some silliness to boot. And it struck me that it was a pretty apt metaphor for our relationship with God.

We often find ourselves bounding toward God, drawn in by a love and loyalty that we feel all the more because we are confident it's returned. And then other times we find ourselves pulling away, most often because of fear and our frustration and even anger that God has called us into a scary place.

But as the author Glennon Doyle said, "It's appropriate that *scared* and *sacred* are virtually the same word, because those two walk hand in hand." The scariest moments of our lives can also be the most sacred moments of our lives if we let them. The moment when a loved

one is dying, the moment when we have to make the decision that will change everything...you know the kind of moments I'm talking about. We can be frustrated, or even angry with God for creating a life that could bring us to that place.

But in those moments, it's not God that's changed. It is the waves of life around us that have shifted their direction. The God that calls us forward is still doing so with the same love and loyalty as always. God *gets* us. So we run toward God, and then run away in our fear. Run toward God, run away in our fear. And God, with endless patience, will keep gently calling us, and inviting us to move past our fear, out of the scared and into the sacred.