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MUSICAL AGENTS

# praise & DEVOTION

**JOE HEAVENS IS A SINGER/SONGWRITER WHO PERFORMS WITH HIS WIFE VALERIE AS "DHARMA MESSENGER." THEY HAVE JUST RELEASED THEIR FIRST CD, "SACRAMENTAL JOURNEY" (SEE REVIEW ON FACING PAGE). WE ASKED JOE TO WRITE ON THE SUBJECT OF MUSIC AS A SPIRITUAL PATH.**



**A**s Catholic school students we were required to attend mass, sing Latin hymns accompanied by the organ played by a real old nun. In the dimly lit Byzantine styled church, frankincense streamed, bells rang, young voices bellowed praise and devotion. It was a minor hell for many of my classmates; I loved it.

In retrospect, I was set up by the "music gods." There has been no period of my life where music and spirit have not been present, albeit easier imagined than demonstrated. Everything takes longer. To play guitar the way I wanted to, to enjoy it and work with it, took far longer than I had expected. Endless hours.

When I first heard Ram Dass do his "Be Here Now" story in the early 70's, I left the hall elated. It was clear I could be "there" - "here" - "enlightened"- in maybe three months, six months tops. Everything takes longer. The discipline that is required to do spiritual practice is the discipline required in music. Someone once said discipline is "doing it anyway." After a number of years I saw how playing music acted as therapy. I had to concentrate to play, thus the mind chatter had to be set aside in order to focus. Eventually playing guitar became a method of working through my "stuff." Often following meditation practice, new songs flow easily.

The music I write functions as a way to express and share my spiritual interpretations of insights and creative thought. My spiritual path functions as a way to open creative channels from where music flows to become enchanting and beautiful, thus seducing my heart to keep open channels from where music flows to become enchanting and.....on and on.

I once met sitar master Ravi Shankar. He was in his room having tea, his space was thick with peace. He said that music is God to him. I think he may have something there.