

## Best Summer Memory of My Childhood

When I was 11 years old, I attended a Unitarian church camp for a summer vacation with my family. It was a pleasant area, with the Puget Sound not far away, grass fields, many old-style wooden buildings, an expansive forest, and an elongated pond between the road and the camp. Deer and other wildlife regularly visited the grounds. It was an ideal place to forget your worries and the routine of common life. As an 11-year-old boy, it was a place for me to meet my friends, and maybe fall in love with a girl. However, this summer camp was more spiritual than others—not because of a religious message, but because I had an awakening at the camp that year.

I had been going to this summer retreat almost every year since I was very young. But somehow, this year was different. It seemed my mind and soul were ripe for a transformation. I recorded my first poem in my 11th year, and I seemed more introspective than usual. I was less interested in playing and joking around with my friends. I was searching for answers to deep questions about life and God.

While walking down a path next to a grass field leading to the camp's cafeteria, suddenly my vision changed. The grass was shining, the texture of the bark of trees was lucid, and each detail around me seemed like it was the first time I was seeing. In a sense, it was a feeling of rebirth. In church, there is talk of baptism, which is more of a ritual than anything else, in my opinion. The real baptism is an inner transformation. But back to the experience, this natural baptism came spontaneously. No effort was put into it. It was like a light was switched on in my consciousness, and I saw everything as new again. This sight was accompanied by a fresh sense of peace—a mental silence that I had not experienced before. Also, joy was coursing through my being at the exhilaration of such a happening.

From that moment, the world around me and within me was never the same. The only problem was that I was too young to fully grasp what had happened. In fact, I thought I was some sort of prophet. Seeing a tarot card reader only made the issue worse. Through the reading, I thought I was “the victory of the people,” and someone no one else was like. However, there were many other people who had the same experience—I just did not know this at that tender age. Later in life, I learned there are many people just like me, and that I was not all that special.

What I learned from this experience is that baptism, or spiritual rebirth, is a spontaneous happening, and not done only from the hand of a priest. Also, I learned about getting a spiritual ego, where you think you are important based on spiritual experiences. My natural baptism and my knowledge of spiritual ego has allowed me to gain much in life: more creativity, inner peace, and how to be humble in the face of achievements.