

The Real Source of My Street Photography Inspiration: From Nature to God

What's poppin', people? It's Dante.

Today I'm going to be sharing with you *the real source of my street photography inspiration—from nature to God.*

Now, this may sound lofty or dramatic, but I truly believe that my inspiration derives from the **Source of all creation—God.**

Before diving into that, I want to give a little context. I've spent over a decade photographing the world in **high-contrast black and white**, wandering through cities and landscapes, searching for meaning through my lens.

Inspiration Begins with Breath

When you look at the word **inspiration**, it comes from the Latin *inspirare*, meaning *to breathe into*.

“Inspiration is the act of God breathing life into you.”

Every morning, when I walk through Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, I feel that exchange—the trees breathing oxygen into me, and me giving carbon dioxide back to them. That sacred exchange is divine.

The patterns of nature mirror our own existence:

- The **branches** of trees echo the **shape of our lungs**.
- The **veins of leaves** reflect the **veins that carry our blood**.

To me, this is a visible reminder that we are **created in the image of God**.

The Street as Meditation

Despite my love for nature's peace, **the streets invigorate me.**

Street photography has become a **form of meditation.**
When I'm photographing, my goal is simple: **to stop thinking.**

"On the streets, I aim to enter a flow state—pattern recognition without thought."

The honking of cars, the movement of people, the closing of shops—it's chaos. But within that chaos, I find order. Every press of the shutter becomes a prayer. Every photograph, an act of gratitude.

The **world is a stage**, and as an artist, my role is to bring **order to chaos.**

Writing with Light

Photography itself means *drawing with light*—from the Greek *phos* (light) and *graphe* (writing).

When I photograph, I'm making **instant sketches of light and life.**

My only goal in life?

"To never miss another sunrise again."

Each morning, I rise eager to catch the light, to see what it reveals. Because light is always changing—you can never make the same photograph twice.

Light is in flux.
Life is in flux.
And through light, I find the divine.

Simplicity and Subtraction

Nature reminds me of one of the greatest lessons in art: **simplicity**.
Inspiration requires **subtraction**—removing distractions, noise, and superfluous thought.

When I photograph, I often underexpose by one stop, using **highlight-weighted metering** on my Ricoh GR. By exposing for the highlights and crushing the shadows, I reveal only what matters.

“Truth in the frame becomes truth of the soul.”

To find God, you must first **turn inward**—in solitude, in silence, in breath.

The Body and the Spirit

As much as I care about spirituality and philosophy, inspiration is grounded in the **body**.

Without physical vitality, there is no creative energy.
That’s why I lift, walk, deadlift, and practice Ashtanga yoga.

“Without courage, there is no curiosity. Without curiosity, there is no art.”

Movement awakens the spirit. The camera around your neck is your invitation to move—to walk, to explore, to live.

The Wanamaker Organ: The Trifecta of Art

For two years, I listened to the **Wanamaker Organ** in Philadelphia every day at 5:30 PM.

Imagine standing under a **golden organ**, in front of a **bronze eagle sculpture**, surrounded by **grand architecture**—the largest playing pipe organ in the world echoing through the hall.

“Architecture, sculpture, and music—the divine trinity of art.”

Those moments felt sacred. Like I was climbing Jacob’s Ladder, ascending toward God through beauty.

Literature and Philosophy

Beyond photography, I draw inspiration from **literature and philosophy**—particularly:

- *Fragments* by **Heraclitus**
- *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by **Friedrich Nietzsche**
- *The Iliad* by **Homer**

These writings shaped how I see the world.

“Heraclitus taught me that all things flow. Nietzsche taught me to destroy in order to create. Homer taught me the timeless story of return.”

I read daily—at least an hour. It sharpens my soul just as walking sharpens my eye.

Photo Books: The Visual Palette

Photo books built my visual foundation.
They train your eye the way literature trains your mind.

My top three:

- **Larry Towell** — *The Mennonites*
- **Todd Papageorge** — *Passing Through Eden*
- **Eugène Atget** — *The World of Atget*

Photo books teach you composition, rhythm, and storytelling.
They remind you what's possible within a single frame.

Art, Light, and the Lineage of Inspiration

Every artist I study leads me closer to the Source.

Caravaggio → Ray Metzker → Alex Webb → Me

- **Caravaggio** — biblical scenes and chiaroscuro light
- **Metzker** — minimalist, high-contrast abstraction in Philadelphia
- **Webb** — color, poetry, complexity

“Through Caravaggio, I returned to light. Through light, I returned to God.”

All inspiration flows backward—through time, through lineage—until you find the root.

Elevation and Perspective

When I need perspective, I go to the **bridges of Philadelphia**:
the South Street Bridge, the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, or the Museum of Art steps.

Standing high above the city, I look out over the horizon and remember how vast
the world is.

“Elevation reminds me how small I am—and how infinite the world is.”

You can live 120 years and never see it all.
Photography reminds me to keep climbing.

Rome: The Eternal Source

In 2023, I returned to **Rome**, my second home.
For months, I prayed in churches, studied Caravaggio’s paintings, and meditated in
solitude.

“Rome reawakened my soul. Caravaggio’s light solidified my knowing of God.”

The cathedrals, sculptures, and frescoes—all of it felt like divine architecture.
Beauty itself became proof of the divine.

Returning to the Garden

When I came home to Philadelphia, I began working in the park full-time—
cultivating gardens, pruning plants, and tending to the soil.

Each day I wake before dawn, take the bus, and return to the garden.

“By working with nature, I’ve returned to Eden.”

Covered in dirt, surrounded by trees, I realized—**this is creation itself.**
This is how I live my philosophy. Through work that feels like play, through communion with the earth.

God: The Ultimate Source of Inspiration

All things return to the Source.
All things return to God.

“When I look at a human being, an animal, or a plant, I see the image of God reflected back at me.”

Photography has become my **prayer**—a way of lifting humanity toward the divine.

Yes, life is fleeting. But a photograph endures.
It’s a piece of eternity—light captured and held.

Destroy to Create Anew

After studying the masters, there comes a time to **destroy them.**

“To create anew, one must first destroy the old.”

I’ve destroyed my use of color, stripped everything to black and white, and let go of all that I thought I knew.

Now, I photograph with childlike curiosity again—reborn each day.
Every frame, every sunrise, every breath... is new.

Final Thoughts

Inspiration begins with **breath**,
moves through **light**,
flows through **art**,
and ends with **God**.

*“We are created in His image.
And through creation, we return to Him.”*

Peace.