Having been released from that divine rotation,
in which one would without pause consent to remain,
I was led along by the will of angels’ songs of elation.

So lovely it was to hear these brilliant beings sing a refrain
which expressed the joy of being in the Lord’s eternal presence
that my glistening tears were impossible to feign.

But far from seeming inappropriate, I had the sense
that those angels saw my reaction to their voices as a sign,
preceding any future sins, of my imminent repentance.

As streams of cathartic waters flow through the Rhine,
so did salty drops run down my pink cheeks,
bearing testimony to my awe and reverence of the Divine.

These angels set me down in the place every journeyman seeks –
Home; which, while not Heaven, certainly is not as wretched as Hell,
and which is wholly welcome after a trek that seemed to take weeks.

But it has been just four days, from when into God’s inferno I fell,
proceeding through the stages of unconfessed and unforgiven sin,
with each sinner punished by means of a custom-made cell,

By which I mean each penalty was its crime’s kin.
Having been led out of that woeful place by Vergil, Italy’s pride,
I climbed atop repentant Purgatory’s rim.
Prune's Inferno

Idlers
Slothful
Gawkers
The Brandon of the Wired
Chatters
Dining hall Junkies
Vonanizers
The Dark Clouds of Smoke
The 50-Proof Sea
Drop outs
And on that mountain, seeing the souls of those who died, I was compelled to continue unto Paradise by that form of light, the one named Beatrice, who I once would have as my bride.

When I beheld her, I could not stand the intensity of the sight, nor that of the Celestial Rose nor the three rings of the trinity; so beautiful were those sights, and so terrible; each way, a delight.

Now, back home, I try not to let memory limit me, as I commit to words what I saw and felt on my mission, as I realize my fortunate fate as an observer of divinity.

Bernard said to Mary: “I ask of you: that after such a vision, his sentiments preserve their perseverance”; this I promise to do, through my thoughts and acts and poetry, improved by revision.

I was blessed with the lucky opportunity to experience such a view, of the good, the bad, the ugly, the sorry, the pained, the proud; of the planets, the moon, the sun, of the transcendent, too.

My knowledge can now serve those not similarly endowed, for I was able to ask many questions as I went on my way; some answers were clear, others hazy; some subtle, some loud.

I wondered how my God, who created the beautiful light of day, could create a place as vile and desolate as eternal Hell; had He made us all good, we could avoid such an unpleasant stay.

But being once lost, now I see; my vision and God’s being parallel, I know there must be a place for those who sin against His grace, a place for those who are penitent, and a place for the angels’ noël.
These places are distinct, and have their own character and face, and the degrees of virtue in man, the evil in man, exists for a reason that after me will be creatively expressed by that future poet, Joyce.¹

He says suffering leads to love and compassion in every one, pain and death leads to redemption; he suggests Romans 11:32, a verse to make even the lowest man look hopefully at the rising sun:

“For God has consigned all men to disobedience, “that He may show His mercy to all.”

Pain and suffering and Hell and Purgatory make a two-way inquiry, a way for the Lord to test our love for Him and for man to test His love for us – will He save us from the flame so fiery?

Or will we be so evil as to be condemned to an existence of no rest? Some are given a chance in Purgatory to ask for God’s pity, and the rest are welcomed into His sacred nest.

I offered my reader the famous in literature, in politics, in history, as examples of how our actions place us in the cosmos, as a prism of all who revel in Satan’s fire, or bathe in God’s glory.

Having read my poem, this question to the reader I shall pose – is it not clear which acts will have you eating fire with Judas, and which will fill you with the same spirit on which Christ rose?

¹ In Joseph Campbell’s *The Power of Myth*, Campbell discusses the recurrence of the number 1132 in the writing of James Joyce, and his discovery that Romans 11:32 summed up Joyce’s philosophy in Finnegans Wake. Also, bodies fall at 32 ft. per second, a fact mentioned by one of Joyce’s characters; and 11 is the number of a renewed cycle after 10—you are back at the beginning. It’s the Fall and then Redemption, sin and forgiveness, themes similar to those of Dante.
I also found knowledge of the beauty that’s found in every glass
that reflects the face of one graced by the Lord, be it the image of
an elderly man, a beautiful woman, or a fired-up young lass.

All are equal, all are the same, to the divine maker above,
and what was once a lustful passion for Beatrice is
now a higher love for the divine in everyone, a love of God’s love.

We love our family, our neighbors, our spouse, and all are His;
we write and we paint and we sing, and His skills are ours;
we look at one another with sympathy and devotion, and so He lives.

In telling you what I saw and who I met, I have filled up the hours
and, I pray, fulfilled my ordained duty to those I know and love,
by enlightening them and their descendants to God’s powers.

Here, in my study, I will take up my pen again and rise like a dove,
lying higher and farther than I had before my pilgrimage;
and I will keep my eyes fixed on the stars above.