

The late Henri Nouwen 1986

Dear Lord Jesus,

You, “the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation, for whom all things are created in heaven and on earth, everything visible and everything invisible,” you hang dead on a cross. You have just spoken your last words, “It is fulfilled,” and given up your spirit.

I look at your dead body on the cross. The soldiers, who have broken the legs of the two men crucified with you, do not break your legs, but one of them pierces your side with a lance, and immediately blood and water flow out. Your heart is broken, the heart that did not know hatred, revenge, resentment, jealousy or envy but only love, love so deep and so wide that it embraces your Father in heaven as well as all humanity in time and space. Your broken heart is the source of my salvation, the foundation of my hope, the cause of my love. It is the sacred place where all that was, is and ever shall be is held in unity. There all suffering has been suffered, all anguish lived, all loneliness endured, all abandonment felt, and all agony cried out. There, human and divine love have kissed, and there, God and all men and women of history are reconciled. All the tears of the human race have been cried there, all pain understood, and all despair touched. Together with all people of all times, I look up to you whom they have pierced, and I gradually come to know what it means to be part of your body and your blood, what it means to be human.

As I look, my eyes begin to recognize the anguish and agony of all the people for whom you gave yourself. Your broken heart becomes the heart of all of humanity, the heart of all the world. You carry them all: abandoned children, rejected wives and husbands, broken families, the homeless, refugees, prisoners, the maimed and tortured, and the thousands, yes millions, who are unloved, forgotten on and left alone to die. I see their emaciated bodies, their despairing faces, their anguished looks. I see them all there, where your body is pierced, and your heart is ripped apart. O compassionate Lord, your heart is broken because of all the love that is not given or received.

Blood and water flowed from your broken heart. Lord Jesus, help me to understand this mystery. So much blood has flowed through the centuries: blood of people who did not even know why they were trampled underfoot, mutilated, tortured, slain, beheaded and left unburied; blood caused by swords, arrows, guns and bombs, tainting the faces of millions of people; blood that comes forth from angry, bitter, jealous, vengeful hearts, and from hearts that are set on hatred, violence and destruction. From the blood of Abel killed by his brother to the blood of the Jews, the Armenians, the Ukrainians, the Irish, the Iranians and Iraqis, the Palestinians, the South Africans and the countless nations and ethnic groups victimized by the evil intentions of their sisters and brothers in the human race, blood has been covering the earth, and cries have gone up to heaven: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken us?”

Let the blood and water that flow from your heart give me a new heart to live a new life. I know that in this world water and blood will never be separated. There will be peace and anguish, joy and tears, love and agony. They will be there always—together—leading me daily closer to you who give your heart to my heart.

Bern



I was reading Benedictus by John O'Donohue and found these prayers for before and after meals and thought that you might like them to help break the boredom of being shut in at home. I feel they are beautiful so enjoy...

Blessing Bern

Grace Before Meals

*As we begin this meal with grace,
Let us become aware of the memory
Carried inside the food before us:
The quiver of the seed
Awakening in the earth,
Unfolding in a trust of roots
And slender stems of growth,
On its voyage towards harvest,
The kiss of rain and surge of sun.
The innocence of animal soul
That never spoke a word,
Nourished by the earth
To become today our food.
The work of all the strangers
Whose hands prepared it,
The privilege of wealth and
health
That enables us to feast and celebrate.*



Grace After Meals

*We end this meal with grace
For the joy and nourishment of food,
The slowed time away from the world
To come into presence with each other
And sense the subtle lives behind our faces,
The different colours of our voices,
The edges of hungers we keep private,
The circle of love that unites us.
We pray the wise spirit who keeps us
To change the structures that make others hunger
And that after such grace we might now go forth
And impart dignity wherever we partake.*

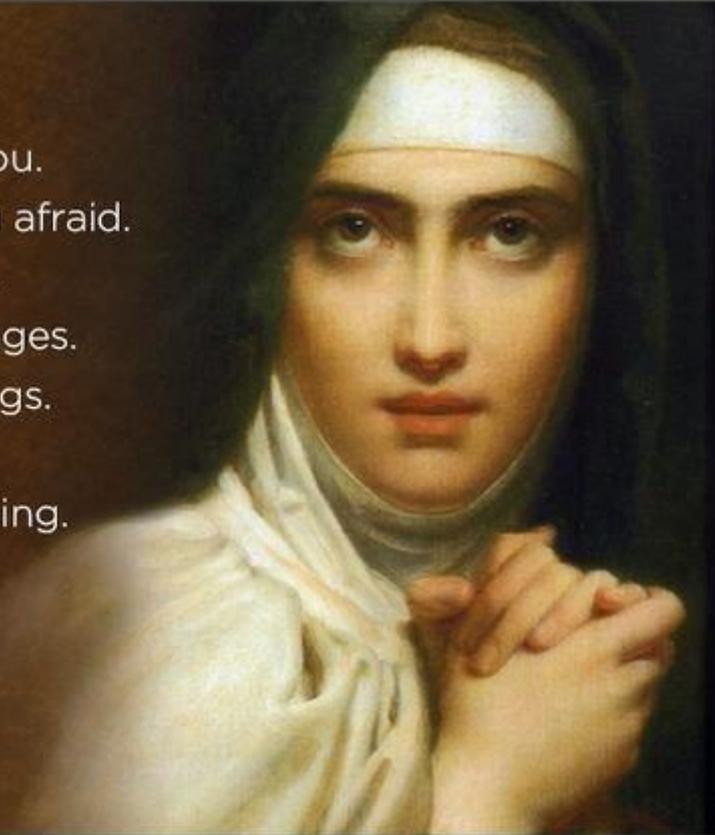
Words from Mary of the Cross Mackillop



There where you are,
you will find God. MMK 1871

Let nothing disturb you.
Let nothing make you afraid.
All things are passing.
God alone never changes.
Patience gains all things.
If you have God
you will want for nothing.
God alone suffices.

St. Teresa of Avila



I know I was touched by the holy Spirit and felt my heart open on Sunday at the Rite of Election at St Patricks Cathedral. I hope you all enjoyed the day and felt the joy of the Holy Spirit. We continue being a 'work in progress'. But I do hope that something deep within you will also make a connection with 'THE OPEN WINDOW' . . . I was reminded of this poem from Joyce Rupp and want to share it with you all.

(Sophia is considered the feminine part of God. 'Sophia' being the Greek translation of 'Wisdom').

THE OPEN WINDOW

SHE WILL GUIDE ME PRUDENTLY
IN MY UNDERTAKINGS.

- WISDOM 9:11 (Old Testament)

When Sophia gifts us with truth, she keeps drawing us to the open window of life, where we can fly freely and accept more of the truth of who we truly are.

inside each of us
there awaits a wonder
full
spirit of freedom

she waits
to dance
in the rooms
of our heart
that are closed
dark and cluttered

she waits
to dance
in the spaces
where negative feelings
have built barricades



and stockpiled weapons
she waits
to dance
in the corners
where we still
do not believe in our goodness

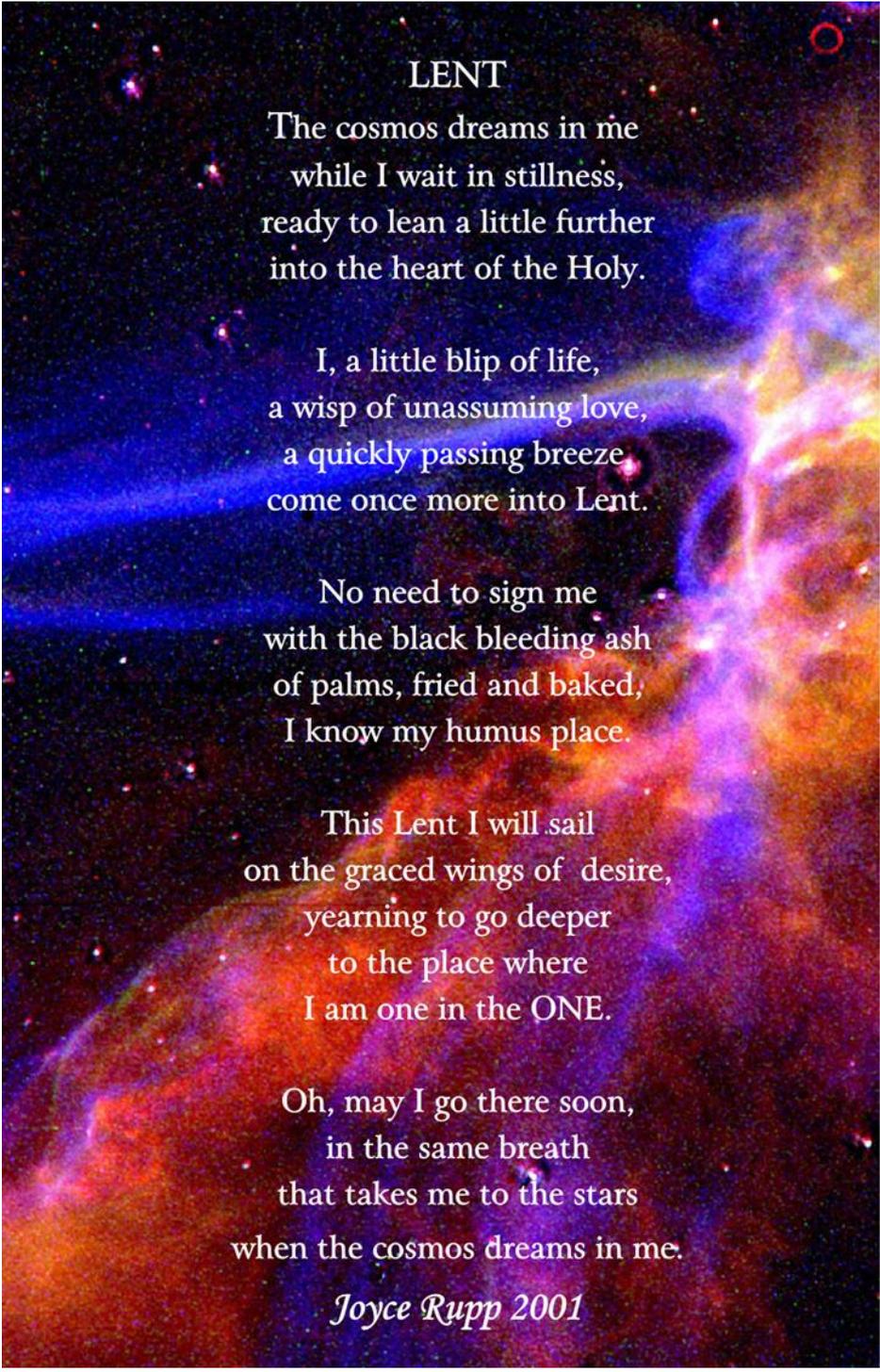
inside each of us
there awaits
a wonder
full
spirit of freedom

she will lift light feet
and make glad songs
within us
on the day we open the door of ego
and let the enemies stomp out.

Because Sophia is a "breath of the power of God . . . a reflection of the eternal light . . . more splendid than the sun" (Wisdom 7:25-26,29), she can give light and perspective on the things that stir and struggle in our hearts.)

- Joyce Rupp





LENT

The cosmos dreams in me
while I wait in stillness,
ready to lean a little further
into the heart of the Holy.

I, a little blip of life,
a wisp of unassuming love,
a quickly passing breeze
come once more into Lent.

No need to sign me
with the black bleeding ash
of palms, fried and baked,
I know my humus place.

This Lent I will sail
on the graced wings of desire,
yearning to go deeper
to the place where
I am one in the ONE.

Oh, may I go there soon,
in the same breath
that takes me to the stars
when the cosmos dreams in me.

Joyce Rupp 2001

Forgiveness



Why do we as church speak about God's forgiveness as though His love for us depends on our repentance? God loves us and that's why He sent His Son to teach us about relationship, about how to love and how to forgive. Sometimes I find this whole forgiveness from God difficult to hold, to understand. It's like one great conundrum or a very complicated puzzle. You see I believe very strongly in the love of God, a God who sent in human form his Son to walk the earth, to be a radical teacher of love and compassion. However, he would also be one who would have to go through grief, betrayal, physical and mental torture. He was a man whose friends constantly misunderstood him and would at times question his ways. I never forget that these same friends slept while he was in emotional and spiritual agony.

We know God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to go through all of the above experiences and more, for us, to make life more sacred, more worthwhile enabling us to enter into a deeper more cherished relationship with God and with others.

My struggle to understand having to ask God for forgiveness, a God who created us in God's own image and cannot help but love us, love us with the heart of God who is LOVE, which is well beyond my comprehension. A love that has no beginning and no end, a love that holds more intimacy than a new born baby lying in the arms of its mother immediately after birth, or a toddler holding a mum or dad's face in both their hands telling them that he/she loves you, and, the intimacy of the moment when the long walk down the aisle ends with the holding of hands of a young couple about to proclaim their love for the other on their wedding day. And, even more intimacy than a couple who have been married for 60 years holding hands as they sit together on the veranda on a warm summer's night, no words spoken or music played in the background, they are at home in the presence of the other. All these experiences are of God, YET, still our God how is LOVE, holds more intimacy than all these moments, these experiences together, and still we think we need to ask for forgiveness?

Perhaps for me it's not so much forgiveness! Jesus' life was one of relationship, relationship with the woman at the well, relationship with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, with the blind man, the women who haemorrhaged, the apostles and the sinners. So, after considerable

reflection and prayer I find myself in a place where my relationship with Jesus is the single most important thing in my life, it is beautiful and it is sacred, it is something I cannot live without. So, the question for me isn't about God loving me, that's a given! It is about making sure my relationship with God is in **right relationship**. A relationship where I am at peace with God. It's about making my relationship with Jesus/God/Spirit right again, if I haven't been the best me, I can be, and therefore I feel I have let my relationship with God down. If I, through lack of thought hurt a friend, I may know that that friend and I will be fine, but, I've hurt them, disappointed them and let them down, we call that sin (remember the word sin means **missing the mark**) **I need** to say sorry, **I need** to fix my own mistakes, my lack of care and or support.

God loves me that's a given but, if I truly want to be in 'right relationship with God then **I need** to talk to God about my behaviour, about the



things I have done that have put my relationship with God a little off course. **I need** to say sorry for my relationship with God to grow in divine beauty, in faith and in a love that is so sacred that words cannot express the depth of its intimacy. Remember always the one thing that never goes off course is *God's love for me*, **it's a Given**.

The freedom and joy of being in right relationship with God!
Please, keep well and take good care of yourselves.
Love and blessings, Bern xoxo

Reconciliation between You and God



I have put together a small spiritual exercise for you at home to prepare for Easter. If life was as it used to be, we would be gathering for our Reconciliation Service. Unfortunately, we cannot gather together, so hopefully the reflection about forgiveness will help you prepare yourselves for Easter 2020.

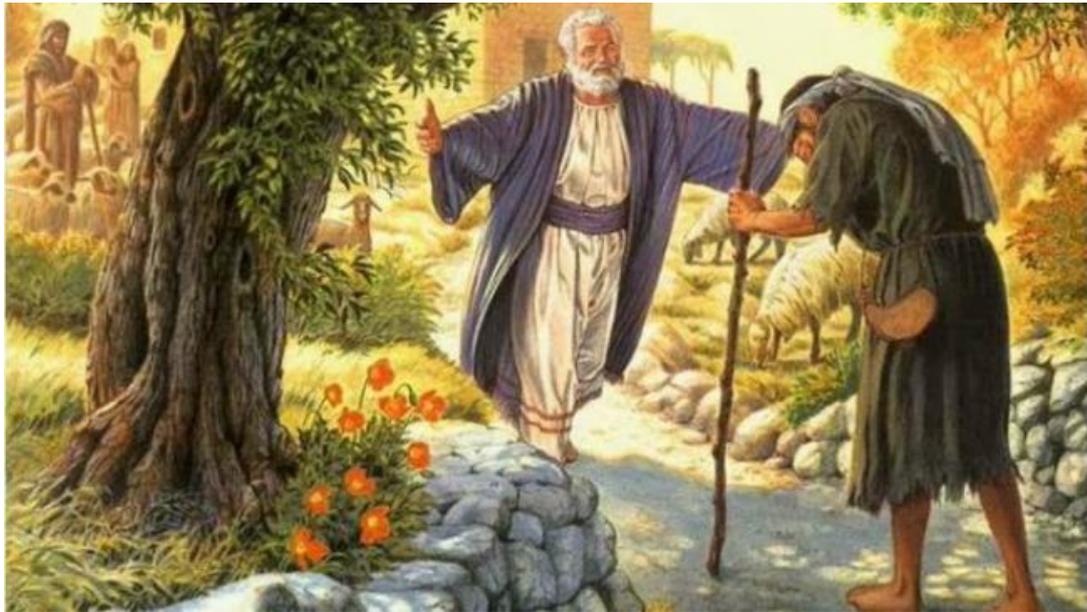
Please stay safe

Love prayers and blessings to you all. Bern (Your Pastoral Associate) xoxo

To prepare for this moment sit in a place where you can light a candle which may help you focus or sit outside where you can be in touch with God through nature. If you have some music or a hymn that you feel might be appropriate you could start with that, which again may help you focus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Generous and compassionate God be with me/us as we come before you ready to make right all I have done that has impeded my relationship with you. *(Take a few moments in silence, trusting in the God's mercy.)*



Pray

Gracious and compassionate God,
We need You today, to help me not to get discouraged
Not to feel alone.

This is a difficult time in which we are living,
A time we have not experience before,
So, open our ears to hear your voice
Help us to know that you are with us always
That you have called me by name
And I am yours. Amen

READING: 2 Corinthians: 5 17-21

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us this work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding our faults against us, and He has entrusted to us the news that we are reconciled. So, we are ambassadors for Christ; it is though God was appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

Responsorial Psalm 42: 1

As the deer longs for flowing water, so my soul longs for You,
O God.

GOSPEL: Luke 15:11-32

Jesus told this parable: 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me". So, the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

When he had spent it all that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want and here I am dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son;

treat me as one of your paid servants". So, he left the place and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved to pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly.

Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

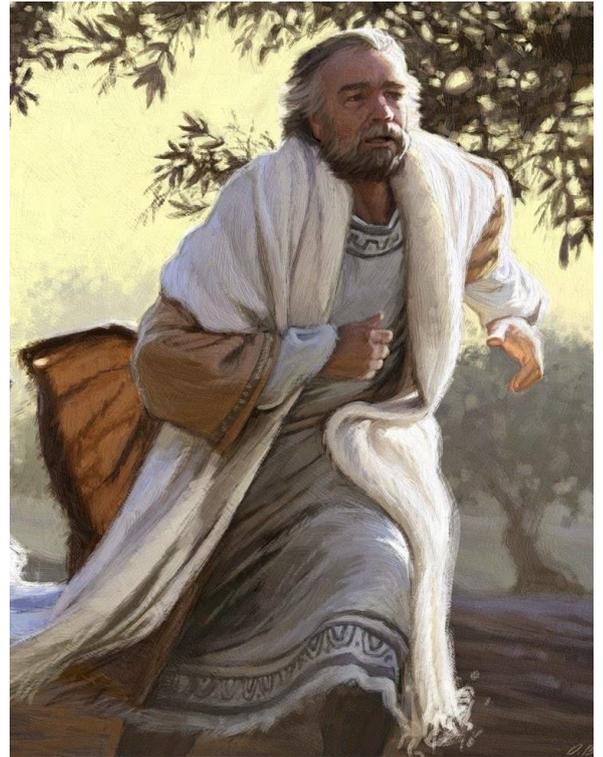
Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come. "replied the servant," and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me as much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening." The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found". The Gospel of the Lord.

(Sit quietly with this scripture and notice what words or images have come to you.

Trust yourself and in the quiet of your own heart respond to God.)

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

(For this exercise sit in silence or play some quiet background music, notice which of these questions resonate with you)



- What patterns or habits do I detect in my behaviour?
- What bad attitudes or faulty perceptions lie behind my actions?
- In what ways am I growing as a Christian?
- In what ways do I need to grow more?
- What do I want or need to change about my life right now?

- Do I turn to God in my need?
- What am I doing to grow spiritually? How do I grow spiritually? When?
- Am I envious, hot-tempered, or prejudiced?
- Do I care for the poor and the sick?
- Am I honest and fair with everyone, or do I foster a “throw-away culture”?
- Do I respect the environment?
- How I do use my time?
- Am I gentle and humble? A peacemaker?

- Have I given food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty?
- Have I welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked?
- Have I set aside time and had the courage to visit the sick and the imprisoned?
- Have I helped anyone be released from doubts that make them fearful and that are often the source of loneliness?
- Have I been a neighbour to someone who is lonely and afflicted?

- Have I been patient with others based on the example of God who is so patient with us?

(Take a moment to try and notice why the questions that resonated with you did so? Through the week make it a point to talk with God about these issues.)

Compassionate Father, we need to be aware of your loving kindness.

We desire to be in right relationship with you, with a sincere and contrite heart and a spirit of love to go forth in your peace.

Let us now pray to God our generous and loving Father in the words Christ gave us.

Our Father who art in heaven
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen

Final Blessing

May the Lord guide your hearts in the way of his love and fill you with Christ-like mercy. Amen.

May God give you strength in these difficult days and the courage to reach out *(by phone)* to those who are alone. Amen

May you know the love and compassion of our good God, trusting always in the knowledge that God has called you by name and is with you always. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen



VERSE 1

Take all I am, Lord, and all that I cling to
You are my Saviour I owe everything to
Take all the treasures that lie in my storehouse
They cannot follow when I enter Your house

CHORUS

So I surrender all to You
I surrender all

VERSE 2

Take all my cravings for vain recognition
Fleshly indulgence and worldly ambition
I want so much Lord to make You the focus
To serve You in secret and never be noticed

VERSE 3

Take all my hunger for all that's forbidden
Every desire and sin I keep hidden
Search me and know me I want to bring to You
A life that is holy and sanctified through You

GRATITUDE

To be grateful for what is, instead of underscoring what is not.

To find good amid the unwanted aspects of life, without denying the presence of unwanted.

To focus on beauty in the little things of life, as well as being deliberate about the great beauties or art, literature, music and nature.

To be present to one's own small space of life, while stretching to the wide world beyond it.

To find something to laugh about in every day, even when there seems nothing to laugh about.

To search for and to see the good in others, rather than remembering their faults and weaknesses.

To be thankful for each loving deed done by another, no matter how insignificant it might appear.

To taste life to the fullest, and not take any part of it for granted.

To seek to forgive others for their wrongdoings, even immense ones, and to put the past behind.

To find ways to reach out to others, while preserving their dignity and self-worth.

To remember today or send "thank you" for whatever comes as gift from another.

To be at peace with what cannot be changed. Joyce Rupp (adapted)

A Blessing for Healthcare Workers in a Time of Pandemic by Kate Williams

Blessed are the ones who cannot be isolated.

Blessed are the doctors, nurses, chaplains, and hospital staff. Blessed are the hands that are raw from scrubbing and sanitizing, the palms that glisten with oil of healing. Blessed are the shoulders that carry the weight of life and death. Blessed are the feet that are aching from standing at bedside and running between rooms. Blessed are the hearts that are frightened and breaking.

Blessed are the mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, partners and friends who cannot go home. Blessed are the families who become isolated from one another, who sacrifice their own comfort so that we need not be alone in our suffering.

Blessed are the sick and dying, those who bear the image of Christ before us. Blessed are those who believe that when part of the Body suffers, we all suffer.

Blessed are those who look upon this sacred work as gift. Blessed are those who have had enough. Blessed are those who are overwhelmed. Blessed are those who lack the space to process all that lies ahead.

Blessed are those who are found weeping in secret corners of an emergency room so that we might see a strong face to meet our need. Blessed are those who weep openly with us, so that even our tears have companions.

Blessed are you, O God: quietly holding each one of us along the way. Come quickly, abide unceasingly. Love us while we see the worst and give us the hope we need to see our way out.

