REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND EVERYDAY LIFE:
A book of Living Resources

©Backyard Lifecycle XI Gauche and Wax on Tasmanian Oak
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Calvary
Hospitality | Healing | Stewardship | Respect
Acknowledgement of Land and Traditional Owners

Calvary acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which all our services operate. We acknowledge that these Custodians have walked upon and cared for these lands for thousands of years.

We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication may contain the words, voices, names, images and/or descriptions of people who have passed away.

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About Calvary

Calvary is a charitable Catholic not-for-profit organisation with more than 12,000 staff and volunteers, 15 public and private hospitals, 17 Retirement and Aged Care facilities, and a national network of Community Care centres. We operate across six states and territories within Australia.

Established in Sydney in 1885, by the arrival of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary in Australia, our mission is to provide health care to the most vulnerable, including those reaching the end of their life.
Dear Vasco,
in response to your question, “What is worth doing and what is worth having?” I would like to say simply this. It is worth doing nothing and having a rest; You must rest Vasco – otherwise you will become RESTLESS!

And on the 7th day He rested
Genesis 2:2

This resource is available for download at
www.calvaryreflections.org.au
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‘Negev II’ image and words courtesy Shé Hawke

You can find peace in your own desert  
And gain strength from your journey there
INTRODUCTION/PREFACE

We may not need to walk in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights to deeply reflect on the meaning of life and spirit as Jesus did (Matthew 4. 1-11). We may however, find shorter reflective time nourishing to the soul and intellect alike, and that also strengthens the fabric of our workplace.

Twenty-first century living leaves us little time to pause and reflect when busy, agitated or stressed unless we actively embed it into the adventure of everyday life. Yet studies have shown that time out of ‘rush and nervous haste’ – as poet Banjo Patterson (Clancy of the Overflow 1889) so aptly noted in the nineteenth century - increases productivity and nourishes the self, which is good for employer, employee and patient alike. To that end, this Living Resource collection is intended to be relate-able, practical, spiritual and sustaining. To reflect is an act of Mindfulness, broadly understood and within the following pages you are invited to become mindful in a variety of ways in different contexts. Part of our Duty of Care in Catholic Health, Aged and Community Care, and in keeping with the Catholic Social Teaching that undergirds our service, is to minister to all who come into our care no matter what. We will all encounter patients, residents, clients and peers that we find challenging spiritually, socially and culturally. Reflecting on such challenges alongside the joys and rewards of service oriented life, is a reward in and of itself.
How to Use this Resource

This *Living Resource* collection of reflective resources is designed for staff, and patients (their families, carers and communities) to use at any time and to develop a reflective culture in the workplace. Part of the intention of the resource is to make it widely accessible especially:

- when a **subject specific** reflection is needed
- when a **non-religious** reflection is needed
- to **re-focus** in down-time
- to **tap into** the spiritual and emotional world
- to **facilitate** some quiet time
- to **empower** staff through reflective practice and for spiritual capacity building.

The resource collection is designed to be timeless and useable in a variety of settings. It has been arranged in thematic sections for easy use and reference, so that it can be applied to individual and team/group work at any time and in any place.

These snapshots of reflection represent a small treasury of available resources, both ecumenical and as applicable to the Calvary care settings, and our values of Hospitality, Healing, Stewardship and Respect. More generic resources are widely available on line and in books. To this end there is a Multimedia resource list at the end of each section.

The pages immediately following contain information specifically designed For Staff and For Managers. Please read these sections to further help you design your reflective experiences with staff as is specific to your area within the Calvary setting.

We hope you enjoy this resource and find it nourishing, inspiring and motivational.

Calvary Mission Integration
Anna Cirocco and Shé Hawke
The fullness of life –
   In nature
   In everything –
   In love
What does Catholic Identity look like in a Calvary Service?

The flowing blue veils of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary no longer fly down our corridors, yet the spirit of Venerable Mary Potter’s vision, and the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary are readable in other ways. Being for others sits at the very heart of what we do here at Calvary hospitals and communities, and is embodied through the four-fold enactment of Hospitality, Healing, Stewardship and Respect.

But what does that look like?

It looks like this: Every person, irrespective of gender, class, race, ethnicity, abilities, political and religious beliefs is treated with dignity and respect at Calvary; inclusivity is authentic and intentional. We place particular emphasis on the sick and dying as was the vision of our founder Venerable Mary Potter, who took her cues from the story of Calvary and the crucifixion of Jesus. As Jesus was there for us, and his mother compassionately there for Him, we endeavour to embody compassion and ‘be for others’, by enacting the charism of Venerable Mary Potter.

Alongside our philosophy to minister to all people – no matter what – and a reverence for those we encounter, Calvary sites are identifiable in very immediate ways, such as:

- The décor of Calvary, which often follows the colour tradition of the blue veil
- Holy pictures and emblems such as crucifixes, and portraits of our founder will deck the halls, along with pictures of Jesus and Mary
- Information about the tradition of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary (and the history of each site) may appear in the corridors and in entry halls
- There will always be a Chapel, that is used both ecumenically and in the Catholic religious tradition
- People will feel safe and cared for: clinically, emotionally and spiritually.
The Ethos of the Catholic Hospital

We use the ethos of Catholic Social Teaching to enact this holistic care of the other whoever they may be. The 7 tenets of Catholic Social Teaching are: Dignity; Solidarity; The Common Good; Participation; Stewardship of Creation; Preferential Option for the Poor, and Promotion of Peace.

The aim is to bring excellence of care alive in an environment of deep reverence for the other. We see ourselves as servants of the broad communities we care for. Attending to others with dignity and towards the common good in our care facilities is pivotal to the success of our mission, broadly understood.

Like other hospitals and community care facilities, we still have to balance budgets, care for staff and patient, resident and client well-being, and be financially robust. That is under-written by the broader imperative of enacting care with the extra dimension from a basis of faith and charity.
Our Calvary Mission (the Spirit of Little Company of Mary)

Mission and mission statements are elements found in many organisations today. The mission states the purpose of an organisation. It is about ‘being – the reason for being’, and here at Calvary, we are committed to ‘being for others’. That is our mission.

As we gather today as a regional team we pause and contemplate our mission, our collective calling to the ministry of healing.

We recall those who have gone before us, the religious men and women, our founders and our pioneers, the communities who have supported us, encouraged us and welcomed us.

We appreciate those who through each new generation have shared our passion and commitment to the mission; those who have shared their gifts, skills and talents in providing the care which has shaped our ministry.

We pause and give thanks, we contemplate God’s providence.

We renew our commitment to the healing ministry that we may reflect the love of Jesus in all that we do.

Adapted from: Understanding our Mission in Little Company of Mary Literature
FOR MANAGERS: BUILDING A REFLECTIVE CULTURE

Part of our Calvary culture is to develop reflective practices in our teams. Reflection is the process that we use to rest in and critique our experience or learnings. Reflections can be spoken, written, experiential or tangible. The important outcome is that we give ourselves a space to ponder...and process...and then...learn.

“Experience is not what happens to a person; It is what a person does with what happened to them.”
Adapted from Aldous Huxley

As a manager, staff will look to you to initiate, lead or model a reflective culture consistent with our Mission of Hospitality, Healing, Stewardship and Respect.

Reflective practices help us to get into the habit of reviewing our actions and outcomes. Reflective practices help us to improve what we do or how we think. Sometimes, reflections just stop us for a minute to gather our thoughts and to refocus.

At Calvary, meetings usually start with a reflection. Reflections should be a ‘phones down time’ and chosen with care and in advance to:

- be relevant to the meeting
- enhance the spiritual tone of the meeting
- honour the heritage of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary
- be dynamic and not always simply read from a text
- encourage a response, either verbal or private in those attending.

When reflections are well-thought, they can serve as a bridge between the staff member and the mission, vision and values of the organisation. Reflections can be organic and invite participation from those at the meeting.

Reflections should not simply be a paragraph hastily found but should be ‘pearls’ that provoke deeper thinking and engagement.
Developing reflective practice in staff is a valuable way of building skills in all staff. Quality improvement involves: plan, do, check, and act. Reflective practices consolidate this cycle. 

Be creative and think about reflections that require group participation.

Ideas for Reflections:
Prayers, Poems, Songs / Music, Quotes, Readings / Texts, Pictures / Drawings / Images

Remember to ask Questions! For Example:
Q: What does this reflection/song/image say to you?
Q: What words/phrase in this reading/poem/text resonate with you?
Q: How does this reflection speak to you in your work/your life?
Q: Is there a challenge for you?
FOR STAFF: REFLECTIONS - WHY WE REFLECT

Reflection time is a short ‘time-out’. Even God rested and reflected on the 7th day of Creation (Genesis 2:2). Reflection can be expansive and help us to:

- **Focus** on our core purpose
- **Survey** values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours
- **Keep** our practice in line with our mission and values
- **Motivate** and encourage
- **Support** each other through difficult/challenging times
- **Share** words of wisdom or advice that we have found inspiring
- **Build** and strengthen our teams.

A reflection can be:

- A short quote
- A more extended reading/fable/piece of scripture (preferably no longer than 200 words)
- A reflective question to engage team response
- A group activity, short game or exercise (There are lots of good icebreakers/team-building/personality profiling etc. exercises online)
- Appropriate © YouTube clips or © PowerPoint slide presentations can also be shared
- An image or picture can be shared and people invited to reflect on what the image evokes.

Focus questions for team reflection

- **What am I grateful for in the last week?**
- **What challenges are we all dealing with at the moment?**
- **What am I most proud of being able to achieve this week?**

In relation to particular situations that people might have experienced:

- **What happened? So what? What next? I noticed... I wondered... I realised...**
- **What have I learnt today?**
- **What is giving me energy at the moment?**
- **What is draining my energy?**
• *How did I give energy to others?*
• *If I was brave today I would...*
• *What single thing makes me good at what I do?*
• *What do I want to achieve today?*
• *How do I know when I’ve done a good job?*
• *What gives me the most satisfaction in my role?*

**Tips for successful reflective practice**

• It is beneficial to promote engagement with what has been shared, by explicitly inviting people’s responses, thoughts or feelings.

• When inviting people to share an experience or respond to a reflective question, it can help if the person leading the reflection models the process by taking their turn first.

• It is also a good idea to rotate responsibility for the reflection among the members of the team, so everyone takes a turn, and everyone has an experience of attempting to craft a meaningful reflection or reflective activity for the team. This creates variety and co-responsibility and mitigates against reflections becoming stale and ‘samey’ to the point where others become cynical about them!

**Come Together – Right Now**

The link below ‘All That We Share’ (TV 2 Denmark 2017) is a dynamic example of coming together in diversity. As a tangible and embodied reflection exercise it is useful for bringing a team together at the start of a new year, new enterprise or when teams are starting to breakdown or quibble. It is also productive in discussions on diversity among clients and peers and raises some of the hard to ask questions, such as: who would I find it hard to care for and why? Let’s take our cue from the Beatles and Come Together – Right Now, to whatever shows up.

‘We live in a time where we quickly put people in boxes. Maybe we have more in common than what we think? Introducing ... All That We Share.’

[http://gratefulness.org/resource/all-that-we-share/](http://gratefulness.org/resource/all-that-we-share/)

Show the video or take the clues from it and enact the exercise with all your staff.
Turning the seasons
Of the liturgical year
In-spirits the action of faith
1. LITURGICAL

Introduction

The Liturgical calendar walks us through the year of religious seasons and special occasions. Each season invokes a different inflection, a different nuance, a different inspiration and is accompanied by public worship. Ways of approaching this type of reflection might include asking simple questions, such as: How does a particular liturgical moment call us to consciousness; when do we enact a liturgical reflection (for example, in a staff meeting, at Mass or in another context, or companioning the dying and their loved ones) and why does this matter to us? The calendar year is broken up according to the following liturgical seasons: Advent (Christ is coming); Christmas (Christ is here); Lent (Christ will soon die) and Easter (Christ is risen) that celebrate the Sacred Mysteries in particular ways and that are interwoven with ordinary weeks of the liturgical year. How do other faiths and cultures encounter liturgy?

May you always stand tall as a tree
Be strong as Uluru
As gentle and still as a morning mist
Hold the warmth of the campfire in your heart
And may the Creator Spirit always walk with you.

Pike, Elizabeth (Aunty Betty) 2010. Heart Space: a compilation of Prayers and Reflections by Catholic women of Australia, p. 28

Eastern mantras and chants can also facilitate the expression of spirit and blessedness. As increasingly universal liturgical tools they can be adapted for reflective purpose in the same way that Christians sing particular hymns throughout the liturgical year.
Sophia of Wisdom

‘For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.
Length of days is in her right, in her left hand, riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life
To those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.
The Lord by Wisdom founded the earth’

Proverbs 3:14-19

Advent Calendar: Paint, Colour or Pray in Advent

Traditional Advent Calendars narrate the events of the 24 days leading up to the birth of Jesus. This can be localised and re-calibrated to suit the needs of your team at this time of year. Download an Advent template and circulate around staff and teams. Each team is responsible for colouring or contributing a kind thought or act to their allocated day as a tangible reflection in preparation for Christmas Day. (Google Advent Calendar templates).

Colouring is also a therapeutic act of reflection!
Christmas Prayer

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and wisdom of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.

Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clean hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus’ sake.

Amen.

Robert Louis Stevenson


25 December. The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ

Your birth, Christ our God, dawned upon the world as the light of knowledge; for then those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to reverence you the Sun of righteousness, and to know you are the dawn from on high.

Lord, glory to you.

Lenten Meditation

Julian of Norwich and the Hazelnut: ‘It is all that is made’

‘And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, ‘What may this be?’ And it was answered generally thus, ‘It is all that is made.’ I marvelled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it. But what is this to me?’

Lent is a time for deep reflection on what is and what isn’t – sacrifice and resurrection big and small and in between. The life and death of Jesus and every particle of Creation is written in Julian of Norwich’s appreciation of the ‘showing’ of the hazelnut.

Adapted from: Revelations of Divine Love by Julian of Norwich from: https://www.ccel.org/ccel/julian/revelations.txt
For New Year/Christmas/Easter/Lent/A Blessing of Angels

May the angel of the annunciation bless you, inviting you daily to awaken to the God life within you.

May the angel of Joseph’s dreams bless you, stirring your spirit to trust the many ways that the Mystery whispers to you.

May the angel of birthing bless you, calling forth wonder awe and gratitude for all that has helped you to become your true self.

May the angel of Bethlehem songs bless you, tickling your soul with laughter and Joy, heralding hope and good tidings to you.

May the angel of the journey to Egypt bless you, guiding you and protecting you as you travel to the inner and outer roads of your life.

May the angel of the desert wilderness bless you, bringing courage when you experience bleak intense searching and struggle.

May the angel of prayer bless you, gathering you closely to the divine Beloved who longs for your embrace.

May the angel of the children on the lap of Jesus bless you, helping you to see the beauty and freedom of your inner child.

May the angel of the agony in the garden bless you, offering you solace in your times of tribulation.

May the angel at the tomb of resurrection bless you with faith, assuring your faith and trust that all shall be well.

Rupp, Joyce 2000. Out of the Ordinary: prayers, poems and reflections for every season, p. 60
Jewish Testament

Liturgy is intentional dialogue with God. It is spoken, sung and enacted at specific times, in specific places, in specific robes and in communion with others. Recitation of Psalms and singing of Hymns as active reflection, enlivens the living to the will of God.

‘Evening, morning, and noontime, I speak and moan, and He hearkened to my voice.’


Surprise and Transformation

Holy Week can be read as a threshold for new ways of being, a radically transformative time. On Thursday Jesus rode into Jerusalem to resounding applause riding a donkey and waving a palm frond. Many may have expected the new leader of God’s people, ‘The King of the Jews’ (Luke 23) to ride in on a stallion thrashing a sword. By Friday the crowds were trending elsewhere and the hero from the day before became an enemy of the state and the dying man on the cross. Then on the third day a complete makeover, so much so that his mother had to do a double-take – resurrection!

Holy Week reflections teach us that life and the times in which we live are very changeable, and so are people. It is an opportunity to let go of that which we were and thought we knew, and make space for new beginnings and fresh expression.

Gather your team together to reflect on personal changes and changes within the work environment. The grief of loss and change and the herald of rebirth, is as sure as a butterfly emerging from the cocoon, and a sapling sprouting out of bedrock shaped by the weather. It’s part of the metamorphosis of Creation. Holy Week calls us to renew and transform ourselves, to re-draw the architecture of our being and so leave behind what no longer serves us spiritually, socially, emotionally and intellectually, and to dwell in the surprise of what shows up. For some, Liturgy speaks to us through natural phenomena – Creation.
It is not the liturgy that sanctifies our lives; our lives are already sacred, and liturgy tries to remind us of that.

Ross, Maggie, 2013. Writing the Icon of the Heart p. 53

Multimedia Resources:

Catholic Health United States of America has a website rich in podcast material, particularly for Lenten Reflection and Liturgy. Go to https://www.chausa.org/prayers/prayer-library and scroll down to the reflections for the current year.

Be happy for this moment
This moment is your life

Omar Khayyam

The threshold of birth –
From a private pool
To an infinite sea
Of worldly wonder

SMRH
2. CELEBRATIONS AND THRESHOLDS

Introduction

Whether you are celebrating successful surgery, a birthday milestone, a team achievement, a new year, or simply being alive to smell the roses, happiness is that human quality that helps our spirit shine through us. Reflecting on celebration is as necessary as reflecting on the more challenging aspects of our humanity, yet we often overlook it as a reason for reflection. This collection of reflections encourages you and your team to celebrate your successes, happiness and new thresholds, and discover more fully what they mean to you. This section also encourages you and your staff to reflect on the gifts of Creation as cause for celebration. As Stewards of Creation there is much to honour and celebrate.

Cultural and Personal Happiness

A smile is the raw material of happiness and smiling is contagious. Permission to infect!

The Royal Government of Buddhist Bhutan for example, has 10 ministries that aim to bring to fruition, the goal of Gross National Happiness (along with their Gross National Product). There are many ways to recognise, celebrate and create happiness, both culturally and personally. How do you enact, celebrate or acknowledge happiness in your day?

World Happiness Day was recently nominated by the United Nations as March 20th.

Celebrate Life
‘Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday’


‘We are all minted by God, one soul expressed differently.

*Rabbi Lawrence in conversation with Anglican Bishop Jensen

Omar Khayyam, the 11th century Persian astronomer-come-mystic, had much to say about self-realization and crossing new thresholds. He suggests the following: ‘Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life.’ Happiness is not necessarily a constant in life but being awake to it can change its effects. Good, bad or somewhere in between, what we have is the present moment, the gift of presence waiting to be unwrapped, honoured and/or celebrated for what it is. Too often we are disfigured by past regrets and future fears and miss out on what is before us – inadvertently shutting out our own shine potential and happiness factor. Reflect on your most recent happiness moment, as a team and/or individually.

The New Year
Faithful Companion,
In this New Year I pray:
to live deeply, with purpose
to live freely, with detachment
to live wisely, with humility
to live justly, with compassion
to live lovingly, with fidelity
to live mindfully, with awareness
to live gratefully, with generosity
to live fully, with enthusiasm.

Help me to hold this vision and to daily renew it in my heart, becoming ever more one with you, my truest Self.

What is Success/Success

Success is speaking words of praise,
In cheering other people's ways.
In doing just the best you can,
With every task and every plan.

It's silence when your speech would hurt,
Politeness when your neighbour's curt.
It's deafness when the scandal flows,
And sympathy with others' woes.

It's loyalty when duty calls,
It's courage when disaster falls.
It's patience when the hours are long,
It's found in laughter and in song.

It's in the silent time of prayer
In happiness and in despair,
In all of life and nothing less,
We find the thing we call success.

Gleeson, Christopher 2003. A Canopy of Stars: some reflections for the journey, p. 91

Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain.

Joseph Campbell
Australia Day

May God who formed
our southern land be for us a rock of strength.
May God who rules
our southern seas keep us safe in every storm.
May God who made
our southern skies
transform clouds and rainbows into light. Amen.

Adapted from: http://liturgybrisbane.net.au/liturgylines/australia-day-3/

©‘Wattle and Wildflowers’ Tidbinbilla 2016 Image reprinted with kind permission of Annie Franklin
Spread Love

Spread love everywhere you go
First of all in your own house.
Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbour …
Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.
Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.


Celebrate Venerable Mary Potter

Mary Potter, founder of Little Company of Mary (1877), inspires us to celebrate life and support others in life and death – to go where need is greatest. We honour her life and the founding of the Little Company of Mary, by expanding the heart of Calvary and its mission through celebration of her vision and extending compassionate care to others.

One Woman’s Journey

Denied a theological voice, Mary Potter used her theological insight to seek change. Empowered by what she saw as profound experiences of God, she believed she had been called to a radical love and service of the poor, the sick, the suffering and the dying.

*Extracted from: ‘One Woman’s Journey: Mary Potter, Founder – Little Company of Mary’ by Sr. Elizabeth West LCM PhD*

In November, Calvary celebrates the birthday of the Venerable Mary Potter (November 22nd 1847), for without the gift of her birth, her radical social justice activism and spiritual vision could not have been realised. Individual Calvary services join in this celebration as well as those celebrations that are site specific, such as hospital, community care and retirement village birthdays.
Crossing the threshold of devotion …
‘her belief in her call’ … her charism … to be lived, preserved, deepened and constantly developed … continues in a process of growth …

Adapted from Liz West (LCM PhD) One Woman’s Journey: The Life of Mary Potter, 2000.

Life is an unfoldment,
and the further we travel
the more truth we can comprehend.
To understand the things that are at our door
is the best preparation
for understanding those that lie beyond.

Hypatia of Alexandria – Mathematician, Astronomer and Philosopher 400 CE

Evening Prayer

O God,
Who hast bound us together with the Little Company of Mary,
give us grace to understand
how our lives depend upon the courage, the industry, the honesty and the integrity of our fellow-team members;
that we may be mindful of their needs,
grateful for their truthfulness,
and dedicated to our responsibilities in support of them;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr; 1892-1971 adapted for Little Company of Mary,
Multimedia Resources:

Who do we find it difficult to care for because they are different to us? Celebrate the diversity of the world through info graphic and statistical data that can be found in these websites:

http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/global-village.htm

Geraldine Doogue with Tiwi Islanders who mesh cultural spirituality with Catholicism, through the Liturgical service of a Vietnamese Priest can be found here: http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s3961785.htm

Children's Choir performance can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHSDrQihDjw

Susan Boyle singing Hallelujah can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPJFB0nfLAg

A visual of a prayer by Pope Francis from Laudato Si Environmental Encyclical about celebrating the environment that sustains us and our stewardship of Creation, can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tYdOIqvpgg
Grief turns out to be a place none of us know until we reach it

Didion, J., A Year of Magical Thinking, 2007.

From: A Brief History of Artists Grappling with Loss and Death
3. LOSS AND GRIEF

Introduction

As we navigate our way through different layers of our humanity, we contract and expand according to emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural challenges and losses. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for example, grief and loss is understood through the concept and protocols of Sorry Business or Sad Business. How to welcome in such a state of being? It’s a big question and reflecting on the actuality of loss and grief may assist individuals, staff and managers, and families in resourcing themselves for this eventuality. Compassionate care, and reverence for life however fragile or dimly lit, are important parts of honouring the journey of our unfolding and enfolding, our living and dying. At the end of the day most people want to be remembered.

Grief is personal; the shape of it and its endurance differs for everyone. Yet we come into community through our grief, as employees and employers, friends and relations. Grief is also present with loss of ability through injury, ageing and trauma. In an Australian context several Royal Commissions have looked into the cumulative effects of trauma through abuse and neglect, and the subsequent expressions of grief and loss, for example through The Royal Commissions into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse, and Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The victims and survivors of these inquiries bear a grief of a different kind that until recently has been under-recognised. Reflecting on the losses and grief caused by the theft of innocence, trust and justice is as worthy as any other grief and loss we may be called to attend. Developing reflective culture around these sensitive issues lays critical foundations for our re-skilling as carers.

Grief eases when it eases, and looms when it looms, weaving mortal and immortal life together. Reflections on grief equip us to continue the caring and compassionate work we do in the Calvary family alongside mourning. As Rabbi Jack Stern suggests, there are ‘three ways to mourn: to weep, to be silent, and to sing’.

“Sadly, I part from you;
Like a clam torn from its shell,
I go, and autumn too.”

Basho Matsuo, Narrow Road to the Interior
Prayer for Strength

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord your God, am with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

Little Company of Mary Prayer for the Dying

Loving Spirit of God, have mercy on the dying:
Those dying in pain and suffering;
Those dying in fear and loneliness;
Those dying from hunger and a lack of physical resources;
Those dying violent deaths;
Those dying without any knowledge of your infinite tenderness and compassion;
Bring to all a sense of your presence. Guard them as the apple of your eye. Shelter them in the shadow of your wings and enfold them in your presence.

This we ask through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Mother of God, Light in all darkness, in our times of dread and nightmares, lead us to Him who is our dream of comfort. In our times of physical pain and suffering, lead us to Him, our healer. And in our times of separation from God and one another, lead us to Him who is our communion. Amen.

Eternal rest give to those who die this day dear God: Those who die alone, uncared for; those whose fear of life or lack of hope leads them to end their lives. Lift them into you, and grant them your peace and sure joy. Amen

O God of resurrection, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we pray to you on behalf of all who are dying this day. May they know the comfort of your presence, the power of your love to give life even in the face of death, and the hope of your salvation.

May they be blessed with the presence of family and friends to banish their loneliness and fears, the love of those who care for them to ease their pain, and the hope of always being remembered by those who they have loved.

All this we ask through the one who died for us that we might live, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.
In Difficult Times

Consoling God,
be a source of serenity for me when struggles
and difficulties threaten to overwhelm me.

God of hope,
assure me of your unconditional love when
I doubt myself or question the worth of my life.

Truth-bringing God,
encourage me to embrace you during those times
when I get lost in the lies of my weakness.

Compassionate God,
hold me to your heart when I feel helpless
in the face of the world’s pain.

Light-filled God,
keep me ever close to you
during those moments
when bleakness surrounds my life.

Comforting God,
shelter me under your wings when I am engulfed
in sadness and overcome with distress.

God of peace, you are the centre of my life,
a strong refuge of peace in the whirlwind of my pain.

I look to you for strength
and a constant assurance of hope.

Rupp, Joyce 2000. Out of the Ordinary: prayers, poems and reflections for every season. p. 62
For People Critically Ill, or Facing Great Uncertainty

God of the present moment,
God who in Jesus quells the storm
and soothes the frantic heart;
give hope and courage in uncertainty.
Give hope that you will make us the equal of whatever lies ahead.
Give courage to endure what cannot be avoided,
for your will is health and wholeness;
you are God and you are needed here.
Amen.


Bruised Faith

Holy Spirit,

We pray for the healing of innocent victims of abuse and neglect both within and outside of the church; every small child who tried to tell
We pray that we may be tender in our care as these people navigate their way through their recovery and healing
We pray that empathy may tend to less visible wounds, that justice will be found
We pray for insight, that we may serve better and be accountable to what shows up on any given day
We pray for restoration to faith, and in God – as God is understood by survivors on their own terms, not ours

Hear our Prayer.

SMRH

‘I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of
friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: ‘Give them something to eat’ (Mk 6:37).”

Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (November 2013), #49

Truth

In order to be truthful
We must do more than speak the truth.
We must also hear truth.
We must also receive truth.
We must also act upon truth.
We must also search for truth.
The difficult truth.
Within us and around us.
We must devote ourselves to truth.
Otherwise we are dishonest
And our lives are mistaken.
God grant us the strength and the courage
To be truthful.
Amen.

Leunig, Michael 2006. When I Talk To You: a cartoonist talks to God.
Storms of Life

The storms of life are what lead us to look for help.
That is not a weakness;
That’s simply the admission that being human requires us to be connected
to the rest of the human race.
Once we have survived one of the great storms of life,
we come to realise that we can survive them all.
Not because God intervened to save us,
but because God gave us the strength to save ourselves.

Chittister, Joan 2012. Aspects of the Heart: the many paths of a good life, p. 98

“If there ever comes a day when we can’t be together,
keep me in your heart, I’ll stay there forever.”

Winnie the Pooh in A.A. Milne, illustrations by E.H. Shepard
My Soul (A Poem for Dementia)

I’m looking for my soul
it was here yesterday
I know
I was with it...
But today
it eludes me
like some distant star
that I can’t remember how to wish on.

SMRH

Time

Time is very slow for those who wait
very long for those who lament
very short for those who celebrate
but for those who love, time is eternal.

William Shakespeare

The Bridge

There are times in life when we are called to be bridges,
not a great monument spanning a distance and carrying loads of heavy traffic
but a simple bridge to help one person from here to there
over some difficulty such as pain, grief, fear, loneliness,
a bridge which opens the way for ongoing journey.
When I become a bridge for another,
I bring upon myself a blessing,
for I escape from the small prison of self and exist for a wider world,
breaking out to be a larger being who can enter another’s pain
and rejoice in another’s triumph.
I know of only one greater blessing in this life,
and that is to allow someone else to be a bridge for me.

Let Your God Love You

Be silent. Be still.
Alone.
Empty before your God.
Say nothing. Ask nothing.
Be silent. Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows. God understands.
God loves you with an enormous love,
And only wants to look upon you with that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.
Let your God Love you.

*Gateley, Edwina 2009. In God’s Womb: a spiritual memoir, p. 59*

We tend to make the thing in the way, the way...
The things that frighten us, just want to be held ...

*Nepo, Mark 2012. Seven Thousand Ways to Listen: staying close to what is sacred.*
A Blessing for Presence

May you awaken to the mystery of being here and enter the quiet immensity of your own presence.
May you have joy and peace in the temple of your senses.
May you receive great encouragement when new frontiers beckon.
May you respond to the call of your gift and find the courage to follow its path.
May the flame of anger free you from falsity.
May warmth of heart keep your presence aflame and anxiety never linger about you.
May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul.
May you take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention.
May you be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.
May you experience each day as a sacred gift woven around the heart of wonder.

O’Donohue, John 2000. Eternal Echoes: exploring our hunger to belong, p. 139

Come to me all you who labour and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Soul and Risk/To Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another person is to risk involvement.
To expose your feelings is to risk being your true self.
To place your ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their loss.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.
But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.
He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but cannot learn, feel, change, grow, or live.
Chained by his certitude he is a slave.
Who has forfeited at freedom.
Only a person who risks is free.
Amen.

Blessed/Beatitudes for Disabled People

Blessed are you who take time to listen to defective speech, for you help us to know that if we persevere, we can be understood. Blessed are you who walk with us in public places and ignore the stares of strangers, for in your companionship we find havens of relaxation.

Blessed are you that never bids us ‘hurry up’ and more blessed are you that do not snatch our tasks from our hands to do them for us, for often we need time rather than help. Blessed are you who stand beside us as we enter new ventures, for our failures will be outweighed by times we surprise ourselves and you. Blessed are you who ask for our help, for our greatest need is to be needed. Blessed are you when by all these things you assure us that the thing that makes us individuals is not our peculiar muscles, nor our wounded nervous system, but is the God-given self that no infirmity can confine.

*Marjorie Chappell*

*Braybrooke, Marcus 2003. 1000 World Paryers, p. 217*
Poem for Miscarriage and/or Stillbirth

The world may never notice
if a snowdrop doesn’t bloom,
or even pause to wonder
if the petals fall too soon.
but every life that ever forms,
or ever comes to be,
touches the world in some small way
for all eternity.


Always keep lifting your foot to climb the ladder of holiness,
and do not imagine that you can mount even the first step. 
All God asks of you is good will.

St Thérèse of Lisieux

Prayer for those who Mourn

Lord,
N. is gone now from this earthly dwelling,
and has left behind those who mourn his/her absence.
Grant that we may hold his/her memory dear,
never bitter for what we have lost
nor in regret for the past,
but always in hope of the eternal Kingdom
where you will bring us together again.
Through Christ our Lord.
R/. Amen.


Broken Young

I am not old
yet my wings are torn
amend my spirit so I can soar differently.

SMRH
'Pietà' by Michelangelo (1499)

He is only dead;
It is not as if he never existed.

_Bardsley, Anne, Part 1 Homecoming, in Loss and Grief: our stories, 2001, p. 60_

Someone I tell you, will remember us, even in another time.

_Sappho Fragment 147_
Multimedia Resources:

Resources for stillbirth and premature birth and miscarriage can be found here: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3474385/

Survivors of HIV-AIDS are now coming into our aged care facilities and hospitals. Many will die in our care. Ruth Coker Burks was a young woman of 25 when she became the cemetery angel for people dying of AIDS in the 1980s; mostly young gay men abandoned by their families and church whom nursing staff wouldn’t touch. Her heart-warming story can be found here: http://www.arktimes.com/arkansas/ruth-coker-burks-the-cemetery-angel/Content?oid=3602959

Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQi8wEHMm5Y

The Living Years by Mike and the Mechanics can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGDA0Hecw1k
There is a crack in everything – that’s how the light gets in

*Leonard Cohen* *Anthem* 1994

Trust the river knows its way
From its genesis to our garden tap …
Trust that we know the way from our Creator
To the garden of our lives

*Image and words SMRH*
4. HOPE AND TRUST

Introduction

We hope and trust that the river will flow on, that our Stewardship of Creation will preserve it and all it serves. We cannot always see the source, the ice floes that urge the river on. We can’t always see where the river meets the sea. Yet we hope and trust in the flow of the journey – of the river, and of us – connected. Despair often precedes hope and trust. We can get lost in the hardness of it all, as the Leunig cartoon suggests, denial and inertia can overwhelm our hopes and visions. Asking the important questions of ourselves: what do we hope that ..., what do we hope for ... and what do we hope in, can help us build hope in others. These reflections are designed to support hope and trust, to build capacity in an environment where the people in our care are sometimes short on both. Humour can be a useful counterweight for reflection in these circumstances.

Help Us To Hope

O loving God, we thank you for bringing us the rivers and streams of this world.
May the rivers we know be an image of the stream that you want to flow within each of us.
Teach us now, take away all fear, dare to let us believe.
Take away our own cynicism. Take away our lack of hope. Take away our own anger and judgments.
We thank you for the faith and desire that is in our hearts. We know that this is an aspect of your vision for us. Now help us to preserve it, protect it and allow it to flourish.
We long for vision, Lord. We know we will perish without it.
Help us to open each new day to a new meaning, to a new hope, to a deeper desiring.
We ask for all of this in Jesus’ name, who understood suffering and was moved to offer healing care. Amen.

Bethlehem Now

Every homeless refugee
desperate for a bed for a night
understands the agony
of Joseph at Bethlehem

Every frightened teenage girl
pregnant and lost,
comprehends the bewilderment of Mary

Every Executive trying to reconcile commercial realities
with moral imperatives
identifies with the local Innkeeper

Every working person in a daily routine
wakening to a sudden reverence for life
experiences the awe of Judean shepherds

Every ruler or intellectual
coming to the limit of human power
evinces the humility of the Magi.

Every tiny infant
born on the rubbish heap of a city slum
shares the indignity of the Holy Birth of God

Bethlehem speaks many tongues.


“Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future, therefore you can trust this indirect, oblique side of yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more important it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey.”

Accessed from: John O’Donohue, Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom
Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed a dream.  
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.  
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.  
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,  
one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

When the last scene of my life shot before me,  
I looked back at the footprints in the sand, and to my surprise,  
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,  
there was only one set of footprints.  
I realised that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life.

This always bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma.  
‘Lord, you told me when I decided to follow you,  
You would walk and talk with me all the way.  
But I’m aware that during the most troublesome times of my life,  
there is only one set of footprints.  
I just don’t understand why, when I needed You most, You leave me.’

He whispered, ‘My precious child, I love you and will never leave you  
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.  
When you saw only one set of footprints,  
it was then that I carried you.’

Margaret Fishback Powers, 1964.
Letting Go

To ‘let go’ doesn’t mean to stop caring: it means I can’t do it for someone else.
To ‘let go’ is not to cut myself off; it is the realisation that I can’t control another.
To ‘let go’ is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.
To ‘let go’ is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.
To ‘let go’ is not to try to change or blame another; it’s to make the most of myself.
To ‘let go’ is not to ‘care for’, but to ‘care about’.
To ‘let go’ is not to fix but to be supportive.
To ‘let go’ is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.
To ‘let go’ is not to be in the middle, arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to effect their own outcomes.
To ‘let go’ is not to be protective; it is to permit another to face reality.
To ‘let go’ is not to deny, but to accept.
To ‘let go’ is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and to correct them.
To ‘let go’ is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes and to cherish myself in it.
To ‘let go’ is not to criticise and regulate anyone, but to try to become what I dream I can be.
To ‘let go’ is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.
To ‘let go’ is to fear less and love more.

Author unknown.
From ‘The Grace Awakening’ by Chuck Swindoll
Swindoll, Charles R. 2010. The Grace Awakening: believing in grace is one thing, living it is another, pp. 137-8
Hope

Hope is not the closing of your eyes to the difficulty, the risk, or the failure. It is a trust that, if I fail now, I shall not fail forever, and if I am hurt, I shall be healed. It is a trust that life is good, love is powerful, and the future is full of promise.

Anon in Grimm, David R. 2006. Names of H.O.P.E., p. xvii

Trust looks differently for everyone. Trust is felt differently by everyone. People with vision impairment entrust themselves into the care of Guide Dogs. A huge leap of faith in anyone’s language!
Do It Anyway

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered; forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind anyway.
If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies; succeed anyway.
If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you; be honest and sincere anyway.
What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight; create anyway.
If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous; be happy anyway.
The good you do today, will often be forgotten; do good anyway.
Give the best you have, and it will never be enough; give your best anyway.
In the final analysis, it is between you and God; it was never between you and them anyway.

This version is credited to Mother Teresa. The original version, “The Paradoxical Commandments” were written by Kent M. Keith in 1968 as part of a booklet for student leaders. Original version: Prayer Foundation (n.d.) Mother Teresa: “Do It Anyway”. Accessed: http://prayerfoundation.org/mother_teresa_do_it_anyway.html

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Percy Bysshe Shelley
Promise/Promise Me That You Will

Be kind to yourself.
Look in the mirror and see that you are beautiful.
Make three wishes.
Be strong.
Nurture your soul.
Continue your prayers.
Let go of any pain.
Banish any anger.
Take one moment at a time.
Hear music.
Make music.
Seek inspiration.
Learn.
Believe in fairy tales and in the magic of dreams.
Find that dreams come true.
Hug yourself.
Feel the sun shine.
Believe again.
Smile.
Seek laughter.
Always remember that you have a guardian angel watching over you.
Find hope.
Find your true love.
Promise me these things.

God’s Spirit Unfolding

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability.
And that it may take a very long time.
And so I think it is with you.

Your ideas mature gradually.
Let them grow.
Let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don’t try to force them on you as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing that His hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.


Psalm 23 of David

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
A Place to Call Home – A Prayer for Refugee Week

Compassionate God,

No one is a stranger to you
and no one is ever far from your loving care.
Watch over those who are separated
from their loved ones and homeland;
those who fear persecution
and hope for a better life in our community.
May we reach out in welcome
to all those who arrive as refugees,
embracing one another so that
together your hope O God
will be our future.
We make this prayer
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.


Hope is patience with the lamp lit.

*Tertullian*

Hope is a testimony that says, ‘even if it doesn’t come true, I will live like it might.’

... Hope is the thing with feathers
that perches in the soul,
and sings the tune without the words,
and never stops at all.

‘From little things
Big things grow …’

Paul Kelly 1991
Multimedia Resources:

Paul Kelly singing From Little Things Big Things Grow can be found here: http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/paulkelly/fromlittlethingsbigthingsgrow.html

Paul McCartney singing Hey Jude can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QlwzmbiKx8
Dear World ...
You are very lovely,
And I am glad to be Alive in you

Anne of Green Gables L.M. Montgomery

‘The Stages of Life’ 1835 Caspar David Friedrich

5. GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

We grow and transform into life, between the lives of others, and ultimately out of earthly life to eternal life with our Creator. In our work as carers and employees in Catholic care we witness transformations that people make as they navigate through life and its inherent challenges and wonders. As with nature, there are times of accelerated growth and transformation that are obvious on an external level. There are also times for interior transformation. The seasons bring such changes to us daily in the cycles of life and death. These reflections are intended for a variety of experiences that relate to growth and transformation and the metamorphosis from new life to fading life to eternal life.

You who call me from a smile
my cosmic beloved
tell me who I am
and who I will always be.
Help me to remember.

This Day/New Year Meditation

As we start a new day, untouched and unmarred, unblemished and flawless, unscratched and unscarred, may we try to do better and accomplish much more and be kinder and wiser than in the day gone before.

Let us wipe our slate clean and start over again, for God gives this privilege to sincere women and men who will humbly admit they have failed in many ways but are willing to try and improve their new days.

By asking God's help in all that they do and counting on Him to refresh and renew their courage and faith when things go wrong and the way seems dark and the road rough and long.

What will you do with this day that's so new?

The choice is yours – God leaves that to you!

*Helen Steiner Rice adapted by:*

Taoist Reflection

A tree that can fill the span of a man's embrace grows from a tiny shoot; A terrace nine stories high rises from level earth; A journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath one's feet.

*Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu (Laozi)*
Life is a Journey

Birth is a beginning and death a destination and life is a journey: from childhood to maturity and youth to age; from innocence to awareness and ignorance to knowing; from foolishness to desecration and then perhaps to wisdom. From weakness to strength or from strength to weakness and often back again; from health to sickness and we pray to health again. From offense to forgiveness from loneliness to love from joy to gratitude from pain to compassion from grief to understanding from fear to faith. From defeat to defeat to defeat until looking backwards or ahead we see that victory lies not at some high point along the way but in having made the journey step by step a sacred pilgrimage.

Birth is a beginning and death a destination
and life is a journey;
a sacred journey to life everlasting.

Rabbi Alvin Fine
Greenberg, Sidney & Roth, Pamela (Eds.) 1998. In every generation: A treasury of inspiration for Passover and the Seder, pp. 102-103. Adapted

Skin

A lifetime of work in these hands
labourers of love
that held the self and others
in so many different ways

... Then gone
wrinkled and marked
the lines rubbed out
from carrying the weight of transition
... the scars of mortality

SMRH
Because I am old, do not lock or bar the doors for me.
I live and breathe:
My energy may ebb
but it still flows.
Remember that!

Dr Elizabeth West (LCM) - Rusting Out: Reflections on Growing Older
We Can Succeed/Face to Face

There are moments in each one’s life when we feel as though we are ‘nailed’, as if on a cross, unable to move, totally at the mercy of others. It may be because of sickness, disability, fear, violence, physical or physiological hurts. When we feel helpless we come face to face with our own truth and the truth of those around us. We can become victims of others or we may make others pay the price of our indifference, of our insensitivity. Or we can succeed.


The Difference We Make

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.


Truth

Waiting for truth to unfold is not easy in a world that expects quick results, easy answers. That is a form of hope that demands great courage as well as great patience, and the ability to believe that in the end there will be no winners and losers, only the truth.

Gleeson, Christopher 2003. A Canopy of Stars: some reflections for the journey, p. 84
Priorities/And God said, “No”

I asked God to grant me patience.
God said, No.
Patience is a by-product of tribulations;
it isn’t granted, it is earned.
I asked God to give me happiness.
God said, No.
I give you blessings.
Happiness is up to you.
I asked God to spare me pain.
God said, No.
Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares
and brings you closer to me.
I asked God to make my spirit grow.
God said, No.
You must grow on your own,
but I will prune you to make you fruitful.
I asked for all things
that I might enjoy life.
God said, No.
I will give you life
so that you may enjoy all things.
I asked God to help me LOVE others,
as much as God loves me.
God said...
Ahhhh, finally you have the idea.
‘Stop telling God how big your storm is.
Instead tell your storm how big your GOD is.’

We Pray this Day

Oh God, we pray this day:
for all who have a song they cannot sing,
for all who have a burden they cannot bear,
for all who live in chains they cannot break,
for all who wander homeless and cannot return,
for those who are sick and for those who tend them,
for those who wait for loved ones and wait in vain,
for those who live in hunger,
and for those who will not share their bread,
for those who are misunderstood,
and for those who misunderstand,
for those who are captives and for those who are captors,
for those whose words of love are locked within their hearts,
and for those who yearn to hear those words.
Have mercy upon these, O God.
Have mercy upon us all.
Amen


Prayer/The Closing of the “Year of Faith”

We come to you, Spirit of God,
conscious of both our frailty and our good will,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.

Give us light and strength
to know and to do what is best
for the community we serve.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us with your power,
for you are God,
sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all:
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance or corrupted by fear or favour.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name may we temper justice with love, so that all our decisions may work for the good of our community and be pleasing to you. Amen.

Isidore of Seville 560-636


Just Listen

I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention. And especially if it’s given from the heart.

When people are talking, there’s no need to do anything but receive them. Just take them in. Listen to what they’re saying. Care about it. Most times caring about it is even more important than understanding it.

Remen, Rachel, Naomi 2006. Kitchen Table Wisdom: stories that heal, p. 143

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver - Poet
Change and transformation manifest differently for each of us. For the person about to retire, golf or yoga could be a welcome friend and activity. For others, retirement may mean a lack of purpose and productivity. For others, change may mean having more time for the grandchildren, travel or moving into a retirement community. Spiritual midwife Joyce Rupp guides us gently through some of the major transformational changes in life:

Loving Companion
You know my thoughts and feelings as I make this significant move. Remind me of my treasures: good memories and the love of dear ones ... lift my drooping spirit when I long to be living in some other place ... grant me the grace to adapt to my new environment. Let me see hidden sources of joy and happiness.

*Rupp, Joyce, Moving into a Retirement Village. Accessed: www.joycerupp.com/*
A Creed to Live by

Don’t undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.

Don’t set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.

Don’t take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them life is meaningless.

Don’t let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time you live all days of your life.

Don’t give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.

Don’t be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is fragile thread that binds us to each other.

Don’t be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.

Don’t shut love out of your life by saying it is impossible to find. The quickest way to receive love is to give love; the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly, and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

Don’t dismiss your dreams. To be without dreams is to be without hope, to be without hope is to be without purpose.

Don’t run through life so fast that you forget not only where you have been, but also where you are going.

Life is not a race, but a journey to be savoured each step of the way.

Prayer

O God,

At every age, at every stage of our lives you are there, offering your gift of Life.
You invite us constantly to fresh insights, deeper relationships, richer understanding, wider horizons.

Heal in us, all that makes us:
- Blind to new possibilities
- Lame and unable to tread boldly
- Paralysed by self-doubt, lack of imagination, misgivings, human respect

Empower us through faith in you.

Stir us to be open to the depths of possibility, within ourselves and our world so that in our lives we might experience the life of your Spirit anew.


If I had My Child to Raise Over Again

If I had my child to raise all over again, I’d finger paint more, and point the finger less.
I’d do less correcting, and more connecting.
I’d take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less, and know to care more.
I’d take more hikes and fly more kites.
I’d stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I’d run through more fields, and gaze at more stars.
I’d do more hugging, and less tugging.
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.
I’d teach less about the love of power, and more about the power of love

Loomans, Diana & Loomans, Julia 2003. 100 Ways To Build Self-Esteem And Teach Values, p. 216

Multimedia Resources:

Songs – Forever Young by Youth Group can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQi8wEHMm5Y

We’ll Meet Again by Vera Lynne can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHcunREYzNY
Acceptance doesn’t mean inertia and resignation
  Acceptance can mean action and praise
  Gratitude and joy
  For the opportunity to go forward differently

For small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through Love

  *Carl Sagan*
6. GRATITUDE AND ACCEPTANCE

Introduction

Before acceptance and gratitude can unfold, there is awareness. These reflections centre on different manifestations of ‘coming awake’ to ourselves and others in the face of change, and building resilience in new and challenging situations. Awareness and acceptance of a new situation can provide opportunities to explore different options or to ‘rest’ in ‘what is’.

Choose a poem or prayer from below and reflect on its meaning for you and/or your team. The wisdom of Winnie the Pooh may be ‘universal’ in the West, yet unheard of elsewhere. Ask your team to bring in similar ‘wisdom characters’ from their worlds.

Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude.

*Milne, A.A. Winnie the Pooh*
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 the unwanted.

To focus on beauty in the little things of life, as well as being deliberate about the great beauties of 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 to be 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 and help the disenfranchised, while also preserving their dignity and self-worth.

To be as loving and caring as possible, in a culture that consistently challenges these virtues.

To remember to say or send “thank you” for whatever comes as a gift from another.

To be at peace with what cannot be changed.

Rupp, Joyce & Wiederkehr, Macrina 2005. The Circle Of Life: the heart’s journey through the seasons, pp. 194-195

Let us be grateful for the people who make us happy they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.

Emanuel Swedenborg
Presence

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant?’
Actually who are we Not to be? You are a child of God.
Your playing small doesn’t serve the world.
There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that
other people won’t feel insecure around you.
We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.
And as we let our light shine, unconsciously give
other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.


Loving God/A Prayer for Challenging Racism

God,
You are the source of human dignity, and it is in your image that we are created.
Pour out on us the spirit of love and compassion.
Enable us to reverence each person, to reach out to anyone in need, to value and appreciate those who differ from us, to share the resources of our nation, to receive the gifts offered to us by people from other cultures.
Grant that we may always promote the justice and acceptance that ensures lasting peace and racial harmony.
Help us to remember that we are one world and one family.
Amen

Gift of God/Persons are Gifts

Persons are the gifts of God to me.
They are already wrapped, some beautifully and others less attractively.
Some have been mishandled in the mail;
others come ‘Special Delivery.’
Some are loosely wrapped, others very tightly enclosed.
But the wrapping is not the gift, and this is an important realisation.
It is so easy to make a mistake in this regard, to judge the contents by the cover.
Sometimes the gift is opened very easily; sometimes the help of others is needed.
Maybe it is because they are afraid, maybe they have been hurt before and don’t want to be hurt again.
It could be that they were once opened and then discarded.
They may now feel more like ‘things’ than ‘human persons.’
I am a person: like everyone else I too am a gift.
God filled me with a goodness that is only mine.
And yet sometimes I am afraid to look inside my wrapping.
Maybe I am afraid I would be disappointed.
Maybe I don’t trust my own contents.
Or it may be that I have never really accepted the gift that I am.
Every meeting and sharing of persons is an exchange of gifts.
My gift is me; your gift is you.
We are gifts to each other.

“Friendship is Eucharist” by Fr G. E. Nintemann
Perry, Cheryl 1997. Youth Spirit: program ideas for church groups, p. 81. Adapted

A mother was asked what she would do if one of her children came home and said they were gay. She replied: Love them of course, as I always have.

It is a given that we are all different expressions of God’s love. Let us not replace God’s unconditional love with indifference or hatred. As the United Nations suggests let us always put the humanity of someone before anything that seems different.

Nobody, as long as they move about among the chaotic currents of life, is without trouble.

Adapted from C.J. Jung
A Time for Everything

Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses. He sets the time for birth and the time for death, the time for planting and the time for pulling up, the time for killing and the time for healing, the time for tearing down and the time for building. He sets the time for sorrow and the time for joy, the time for mourning and the time for dancing, the time for making love and the time for not making love, the time for kissing and the time for not kissing. He sets the time for finding and the time for losing, the time for saving and the time for throwing away, the time for tearing and the time for mending, the time for silence and the time for talk. He sets the time for love and the time for hate, the time for war and the time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
Take Time

Take time to think
Take time to pray
Take time to laugh
It is the source of power
It is the greatest power on earth
It is the music of the soul
Take time to play
Take time to love and be loved
Take time to give
It is the secret of perpetual youth
It is God's given privilege
It is too short a day to be selfish
Take time to read
Take time to be friendly
Take time to work
It is the fountain of wisdom
It is the road to happiness
It is the price of success
Take time to do charity
It is the key to heaven.

From a sign on the wall of Mother Teresa's children's home in Calcutta

Behold what you are; become what you receive.

From: St Augustine’s Sermon 272 (On the day of Pentecost - To the Catechumens, Concerning the Sacrament)
Prayer for Nature/Prayer about Nature

Grant me the ability to be alone;
may it be my custom to go outdoors each day
among the trees and grass - among all growing things
and there may I be alone, and enter into prayer,
to talk with the One to whom I belong.
May I express there everything in my heart,
and may all the foliage of the field -
all grasses, trees, and plants -
awake at my coming,
to send the powers of their life into the words of my prayer
so that my prayer and speech are made whole
through the life and spirit of all growing things,
which are made as one by their transcendent Source.
May I then pour out the words of my heart
before your Presence like water, O Lord,
and lift up my hands to You in worship,
on my behalf, and that of my children!

*Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav
Biers-Ariel, Matt, Newbrun, Deborah & Smart, Michael Fox 2000. Spirit In Nature: teaching Judaism and ecology on the trail, p. 59. Adapted

A Prayer of Thanks for Healing

I thought you had forgotten me, I felt abandoned and alone.
I prayed to You, but You never answered. I searched, but I couldn’t find You.
And then, without warning, You spread Your love over me and taught me
not to fear.
You quieted me, You healed me, You blessed me,
you stretch Your comfort over all living things.
Thank You, God, for giving me life and for saving my life.
Amen.

Practise Gratitude

Thank people for everything they do for you.
Look for opportunities to express pleasure in what comes your way.
Focus on what’s uplifting.
See more and more to be pleased about. Comment on that.
Monitor what you talk about. Complain less. Or not at all!
Treat strangers with real courtesy.
Treat family with real courtesy.
Practise kindness on the roads.
Wake up all your senses: how they allow you to engage with and appreciate other people and the world around you.
Have something beautiful in every room.
Let yourself notice how much goodness is in the world.

Dowrick, Stephanie & Greer, Catherine 2006. Choosing Happiness: short answers to the big questions, p. 197

Carry with You These Gifts of the Heart

Trust...that whatever happens, there is someone who will understand.
Honesty...the feeling that you never need to hold back.
Peace...in being accepted for who you really are.
Beauty...in outlook more than appearance.
Freedom...to be yourself, to change, and to grow.
Joy...in every day, in every memory, and in your hopes for the future.
Love...to last a lifetime, and perhaps beyond.

Be Thankful/How We Grow

Be thankful that you don’t already have everything you desire,
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don’t know something
For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times.
During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations
Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge
Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes
They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you’re tired and weary
Because it means you’ve made a difference.

It is easy to be thankful for the good things.
A life of rich fulfilment comes to those who are
also thankful for the setbacks.

GRATITUDE can turn a negative into a positive.
Find a way to be thankful for your troubles
and they can become your blessings.

Author Unknown
Knight, Brenda (ed.) 2013. Grateful Table: blessings, prayers and graces for the daily meal.
Berkeley, pp. 48-49

“I Wish You Enough!”

I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.
I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.
I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.
I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.
I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.
I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.
I wish you enough failure to keep you humble.
I wish enough “Hello’s” to get you through the final “Goodbye.”

story-.html Adapted
Gratitude for Friends and Peers

In *Winnie the Pooh*, Eeyore’s gratitude for his friends is reflected in the adventure of losing and re-attaching his tail. He simply couldn’t have found it alone. Equally, in the *Wizard of Oz*, the Lion, the Tin Man and the Scarecrow express gratitude to each other and Dorothy for finding that piece of themselves that was missing or under exercised! There’s an Eeyore, Lion, Tin Man and Scarecrow in every team! How do we recognise, accept and express gratitude for these caricatures in our team, and within ourselves?

‘It’s not much of a tail, but I’m sort of attached to it’
said Eeyore.

*Winnie the Pooh by A.A. Milne*

Acceptance of Self and Others

What are those things we find hard to accept in each other, ourselves? Who do we find it hard to care for because of a difference of some kind? Can we reframe difference as: people who are experienced as different by others, and people who experience themselves as different from others? When we think about it, most of the world’s people would fall into one of the above categories. Reflecting in a team on our common humanity, as well as those things that delineate us from others, helps develop self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. The Australian Human Rights Commission speaks to acceptance and respect for everyone everywhere, every day in response to the 1948 International Declaration of Human Rights. Inclusivity and acceptance for example can be found here in Article 3:

‘Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.’ … that means everyone, irrespective of ability, class, race, colour, sex, gender identity, sexual preference, politics and religion.

Multimedia Resources:


Give Peace a Chance

*John Lennon*

At the water’s edge
A clash of worlds
Alive in the chaos
Sometimes, serenity appears in action
7. PEACE AND SERENITY

Introduction

Many religious and spiritual leaders advocate peace. Yet the path to peace, and the serenity that follows, often eludes us. Spiritual leaders such as Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama have given public address about finding peace within ourselves, to share with others. These reflections are designed to help us discover, nurture and sustain our inner peace so that we can continue to create, give, and share peace with others and recognise serenity, and to remain awake to the need for World Peace.

What might that look like – World peace?

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon.
And where there’s doubt, true faith in you …

*Prayer of St Francis of Assisi adapted by Sebastian Temple*

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time enjoying one moment at a time accepting hardships as the pathway to peace taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever and ever in the next.

Amen.


A clash of doctrines is not a disaster – it is an opportunity.

*Alfred North Whitehead*
Saint Teresa’s Prayer for Peace

May today there be peace within.
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.
May you use those gifts that you have received,
and pass on the love that has been given to you.
May you be content knowing you are a child of God.
Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to
sing, dance, praise and love.
It is there for each and every one of us.

*Macdonald, Stacey 2013. Angels and Energy: daily inspirations and angel guidance, p. 6-7*

International Prayer for Peace

Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.
Lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace,
Let peace fill our hearts,
our world, our universe.
Let us dream together, pray together, work together
to build one world of peace and justice for all.
Amen.

*Satish Kumar, All from They shall not rob us of hope.
Hebblethwaite, Margaret (ed.) 2000. The Living Spirit: prayers and readings for the Christian year: a tablet anthology, p. 138*
Ripples/Like Ripples on a Lake

Worldly activities are like ripples on a lake: hardly has one disappeared that another one emerges. It is endless. Worldly activities will never stop until death. Now that we have obtained a precious human life, it would be such a pity if we were not to open ourselves up a little to the influence of Dharma. We should seize every opportunity to practice the truth and to improve ourselves, instead of waiting for a time when we are less busy.

His Holines the Dalai Lama
Lama, Dalia 2002. The Spirit of Peace: teachings on love, compassion and everyday life. (Dominique Side, Trans.), p. 98

Be at Peace Prayer of St Francis de Sales

Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life; rather look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are, will deliver you from out of them. He has kept you hitherto, and He will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will bury you in His arms. Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

Sadako lived in Hiroshima in 1945. As an infant, she was exposed to radiation after the dropping of the atomic bomb at the end of WWII. She is the mostly widely known hibakusha (bomb affected person) and statues of her sit in the Hiroshima Peace Park and other Peace parks in the world, in her memory, such as this one in Seattle, USA.

There is a Japanese tradition of making 1000 paper cranes as a prayer for peace and healing.

Sadako managed to make 644 cranes before leukaemia claimed her life at age 12. On August 6th each year the Hiroshima Peace park comes to life to honour Sadako and the other innocent victims affected by this event. Remembering Sadako and making paper cranes is a potent reflection for the International Day of Peace celebrated on September 21 along with Palm Sunday Peace rallies that are still celebrated in Australia as way of commemorating the innocent victims of war, and as a peaceful anti-war protest. Instructions for how to make origami cranes can be found http://www.origami-fun.com/support-files/origami-crane-print.pdf
The Lord is the Healer

O Allah, remove the hardship,
O Lord of All mankind,
grant cure for You are the Healer,
there is no cure but from You,
a cure which leaves no illness behind.


Heart Prints

Whatever our hands touch,
we leave fingerprints -
on walls, on furniture,
on doorknobs, dishes, and books,
as we touch we leave our identity.

Oh please wherever I go today
help me leave heart prints!
Heart prints of compassion,
of understanding and love,
heart prints of kindness
and genuine concern.

May my heart touch a lonely neighbour,
or a runaway daughter,
or an anxious mother,
or perhaps a dear friend.

I shall go out today
to leave heart prints,
and if someone should say,
“I felt your touch,”
may that one sense be...
love, touching them through me.
Amen

Ruth Harm Calkins
Alsdorf, Debbie 2000. Living Love, p. 112. Adapted
Be Peaceful
From violence you may ‘solve’ one problem, only to create another

The 14th Dalai Lama

Peace is central to the Gospels

Pope Francis
Multimedia Resources:

There are several podcasts available (of varying length) that pertain to peace and justice on the official website for the Dalai Lama. They can be found here: http://www.dalailama.com/

See also the official site for Pope Francis which can be found here: http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html

See also information about Catholic Social Teaching here: http://www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/principles/

Songs: Lyrics for ‘Give Peace a Chance’ can be found here: http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/johnlennon/givepeaceachance.html
Sorry seems to be the hardest word

© Elton John and Bernie Taupin

Sorry is the most important word because it has great meaning in our community, it means having empathy and compassion and understanding

Christine King, Stolen Generation Alliance, 2008
8. SORRY, AMENDS AND FORGIVENESS

Introduction

‘To err is human, to forgive divine’ (Alexander Pope 1711).

Knowing when we have erred provides the opportunity for apology and forgiveness, hard as that feels at times. Some hurts are small and some are big, some are recent and others have festered over time, yet as Rev. Dr Stephanie Dowrick points out in *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love*, (1997), the best amends are unconditional. Equally, forgiveness can be a liberating act. When we recognise our errors and offer amends, it makes forgiveness possible. It’s a positive cycle of reparation and atonement that demonstrates integrity in the workplace and in life. Towards the end of life many of the people we care for will become concerned about ‘making up’ with people that they feel they have hurt or have been hurt by. Compassionate care of this type of suffering in the patient and their family is an important part of the dying person’s life. Sorry reflections are also a useful tool in everyday work and personal life – a gift of reconciliation with the self, with others and with a power greater than ourselves however that is understood.

Sorry

Learning to apologise is the first and most important step in the healing process. Not only does it show the recipient that you acknowledge their right to feel hurt, but it opens the way to forgiveness.

An apology cannot undo what has been done, but it can help ease the pain and tension of the aftermath. It gives hope for rebuilding, and puts value on the relationship rather than the individual’s pride.

In the above picture taken by Mervyn Bishop, ex-Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, pours earth through the hands of Aboriginal Elder Vincent Lingiari, along with the Deeds to Gurindji Land, as a gesture of amends and reconciliation. ‘Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian Law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people … this land will be the possession of you and your children forever.’

The history of Australia is deep and long, yet there is nothing as remote as the very recent past. The collective habit we can have of blotting out things too hard to look at begs our attention and calls us now to be present to peace-making possibilities.

Sincere apologies are for those that make them, not for those to whom they are made.

Amends
Made direct amends ... wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others ...


Grant that we may become mindful to the less visible hard to talk about wounds in ourselves and those we care for. Trust can hasten slowly.

It’s not a person’s mistakes which define them - it’s the way they make amends.

Author: Freya North

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:10

Truth

‘The Museum of Memory and Human Rights’, Santiago, Chile pictured displays a world map of all the truth and reconciliation commissions of the modern era. The tragedy is that such commissions need to exist at all, amply demonstrating our inhumanity to each other, and in the process the planet. Reflection on the more challenging aspects of our humanity demands something different from us. We are called to be awake to those who suffer at human hands - whether it is the plight of refugees, black deaths in custody, institutional sexual abuse or simple indifference to our fellows.
Uncovering truth is a huge part of the reconciliation and forgiveness journey. We each have a personal truth formed by our personal history that is worthy of acknowledgement. As parts of creation and as stewards of creation how can we better care for ourselves and others and enact Venerable Mary Potter’s vision of attending to the disenfranchised in our communities – and the victims and survivors of deep suffering – while honouring our own personal truth? Our Retirement Villages for example, are home to people such as heroes/heroines, who have lived through the Depression and WWII (on both sides of the Front): as veterans, war widows, displaced persons, and children whose parents returned from wars vastly changed, or didn’t return at all.
Forgiveness

Points that Jesus made about forgiveness:

- Forgiveness does not discriminate: anyone is eligible to be forgiven
- Forgiveness does not have criteria of age, height or nationality
- Forgiveness ignores social status
- Forgiveness sometimes takes time
- Forgiveness does not resist love
- Forgiveness draws people to each other
- Forgiveness offers the change to start again
- Forgiveness can transform death into life
- Forgiveness offers the heart new hope
- Forgiveness never has a use-by-date
- Forgiveness is environmentally friendly
- It is to be recycled often
- Forgiveness has no toxic side effects
- Forgiveness brings instant pain relief
- Forgiveness has no limits
- Forgiveness is available to all
- To forgive is to understand
- To understand is to love
- To love is to see the face of God.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.’ The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Tullio, Rachele 2001. 101 Staff Prayers and Reflections, p. 54
Real Forgiveness

There was a huge falling out between them. ‘You always have to be right!’ accused one. ‘You can never see it my way!’ retorted the other. And so it continued, until eventually, they decided not to see each other again.

Time passed. Eventually, contact was made. They resolved to give it another try.

How could they forgive each other?

Easily. One forgives as much as one loves.

*John 14:1, 27*

The Lord Jesus Christ said, ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid,’

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, whenever we feel weary and burdened with difficulties, whenever we sense there is a lack of hope for a relationship, help us to offer all our worries and troubles to you. For you alone understand; for you alone can send us your Holy Spirit to mend our souls.

Amen.

*Tullio, Rachele 2001. 101 Staff Prayers and Reflections, p. 71*
The Lesson on Forgiveness

Two students had been fighting at recess time. Bruised and dishevelled, they appeared before their teacher. ‘You must forgive,’ said the teacher.
Later in the staffroom, the same teacher had a strong disagreement with a colleague.
‘It is hard to forgive,’ thought the teacher.
Suddenly the same two students walked past the teacher.
• To advise ‘forgiveness’ is easy
• To practice ‘forgiveness’ is not easy
• The depth of forgiveness depends on the depth of one’s love
• The depth of God’s love is without measure
• The depth of God’s forgiveness is without measure
• For, to forgive means to love, and to love means to forgive.

Source Unknown

Lord,
listen to my honest prayer.
You know my heart.

Psalm 17: 1, 3, 6, 8

I pray to you, O God, because you answer me; so turn to me and listen to my words. (Pause)

Protect me as you would your very eyes; hide me in the shadow of your wings.
Amen.

Tullio, Rachele 2001. 101 Staff Prayers and Reflections, p. 85
Who is Able to Forgive?

There was once a wise teacher who travelled the world. No matter where he went, he saw sadness and he saw happiness in every country he visited.

As the teacher's reputation for wisdom grew, a woman went looking for him. She needed some advice.

‘Teacher,’ she said, ‘I come to you for the truth. In my village there is a feud between two families. How can this problem be resolved?’

The teacher paused. Finally, he asked, ‘Why do you seek me?’

The woman replied, ‘I have heard about your great wisdom. I want to know how to resolve this bitterness between the two groups. It threatens the very existence of the village. How can they forgive each other?’

The wise man looked at her and said, ‘That is simple. For to understand is to forgive.’

- ‘To understand is to forgive.’ In your own words, what does this mean?
- Who do I find difficult to understand?
- How does a lack of understanding contribute to a lack of forgiveness?

Jesus, you came to this world with dreams and hopes that God has for all of us. Your message to love God and to love one another went unheeded by many people during your time on earth. Our world shows us many examples of a lack of love. Help us to hear your message of love and forgiveness. You forgave because you understood. Help us to turn to you when we find it hard to forgive. Amen.

*Tullio, Rachele 2001. 101 Staff Prayers and Reflections, p. 18*

If you keep blaming others, you give up your power to change.

Those who are free of resentful thoughts surely find peace.

Buddha


The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.

Williamson, Marianne 1996. A Return to Love: reflections on the principles of a course in miracles (ed.), p. 70

Forgiveness is all-powerful. Forgiveness heals all ills.


Forgiveness is the giving, and so the receiving, of life.


Multimedia Resources:

A five minute commemoration of The Stolen Generations can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL_OnGjulmk


Stephanie Dowrick speaking on her book: Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love, can be found here: http://www.stephaniedowrick.com/blog/stephanie-dowrick-speaks-on-forgiveness/
The strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack

*From Rudyard Kipling ‘The Jungle Book’*

May our work become one of the playgrounds of our lives!

*Joyce Rupp 2000*
9. CORPORATE SERVICE

Introduction

As leaders and role models in a team, corporate employees serve the people they lead with vision and innovation, and by enacting the mission of Calvary. Setting the right tone for reflection in staff and leadership team meetings can create a more reverent atmosphere. This tone will change as we walk through the liturgical and calendar year, and mark other occasions relevant to our personnel. Leadership governed by integrity and authenticity, humility and kindness, connectivity and reverence for life, will serve those who encounter Calvary as employees, patients and their families. With leadership comes a Duty of Care to all personnel and patients, which includes the fair and just reporting of grievance and abuse.

Reflecting about different leadership styles in and between communities, aids in the governance of the people we serve. Leadership styles also vary in different cultures and faith communities. For example, in Australian Indigenous culture, there is ‘men’s business’ and ‘women’s business’ each governing from a collective source, consensus decision making, and often in consultation with the intangible world, or God. As Anna Haebich explains, “Aboriginal women’s distinctive leadership can be inherited, conferred by age, status, cultural authority, social standing and local knowledge. It follows a complex system of rules regarding ‘who can speak about what’.”

Vision

Vision is not the ability to predict the future; it is a commitment to pursue possibility. Vision asks questions no one else even seems to know exist. Vision is the grace to evaluate the present and then to ask, ‘Why not?’ of the future.

Chittister, Joan 2002. Seeing with our Souls: monastic wisdom for every day, p. 3

It’s a long road we have come and it’s a long road we can go. We have to walk together and talk together. If you never listen to me, I will never listen to you. If you walk in front of me, I will not follow you. Walk side by side and let’s get there together.

Conrad Ratara, Arrente Elder from Hermannsburg

“To follow Jesus you have to take risks”, without fear of “appearing ridiculous”, and without trying to be “too polite”; and in this, “women are better than men”. During Mass on Friday, 13 January, in the Santa Marta chapel, Pope Francis renewed his invitation to the faithful not to “remain seated in life, looking on motionless”.

Blessing for Leadership/A Blessing for One Who Holds Power

May the gift of leadership awaken in you as a vocation, keep you mindful of the providence that calls you to serve. As high over the mountains the eagle spreads its wings, may your perspective be larger than the view from the foothills. When the way is flat and dull in times of grey endurance, may your imagination continue to evoke horizons. When thirst burns in times of drought, may you be blessed to find the wells. May you have the wisdom to read time clearly and know when the seed of change will flourish. In your heart may there be a sanctuary for the stillness where clarity is born. May your work be infused with passion and creativity and have the wisdom to balance compassion and challenge. May your soul find the graciousness to rise above the fester of small mediocrities. May your power never become a shell wherein your heart would silently atrophy. May you welcome your own vulnerability as the ground where healing and truth join. May integrity of soul be your first ideal, the source that will guide and bless your work.

A Future Not Our Own/A Step Along the Way

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church’s mission. No set of goals and objectives include everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.


Mitioning

A mitioning is a symbolic ceremony that has its origins in ancient Hebrew and Christian tradition. In the Christian tradition, blessing and misioning ceremonies are rituals of great significance. Several symbols may be used to ‘mission’ people. These may include light, anointing or blessing with oil, and prayers. Oil is a symbol of healing and strength. Light is a symbol of Christ, leader, companion and friend. In the spirit of these traditions, leaders at are missioned in public ceremonies symbolising their leadership role and responsibility in promoting the healing Ministry of Jesus within the Service they lead, or as Board of Directors. They are ‘sent forth’ (as Jesus sent his disciples forth to practice their ministry) accompanied by community prayers of support, commitment and thanksgiving.

Light is one symbol that may be used to mission people. In many spiritual traditions light is a spiritual symbol.

Islam

*Light upon Light!*

*Allah doth set forth parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.*


Judaism

“A mitzvah is a lamp,” says King Solomon in Proverbs, “and Torah, light.” [7]

Light is a metaphor for Torah, and light, too, assumes these three forms: light as a tool of life, light as a means of connection to a higher place, and light as light.

Buddhism

*He is called the Buddha. This name means “the man with a light.” But the Light that Buddha had was no ordinary light such as the light of a lamp. His Light was for the heart and for the mind. His Light is not the kind that eyes can see. Nor is his Light the kind that burns the fingers.*

*Buddha’s Light you can feel only with your heart when you know you are at peace with yourself. Buddha’s Light is the Light of Truth.*
The Christian spiritual tradition - the essential foundation of Calvary

Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. (Matthew 5:15)

The Christian is one who has been lit through the action of the Holy Spirit, one who shines that others may see.

Adapted from Little Company of Mary Health Care Ltd.

Within Each of us Burns a Fire...

Many years ago, amongst the Wurrundjeeri people in Victoria, as it most likely was with other Aboriginal peoples, it was the sacred task of the women in the tribe during the grey, wet winter months to carry the fire.

Fire meant life.

In the drizzle and the damp that we associate with the winter months, it was, of course, not possible to start fires at every new camp site. The fire had to be carried. This was achieved by maintaining hot coals in shell cones bartered from the coastal people, like the Bunnarong.

Upon setting up camp, the coals could be flamed into life. It is not difficult to imagine what a vital and important duty it was to carry those shells with the coals inside them.
‘You are the light of the world...
No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub:
they put it on the lampstand
where it shines for everyone in the house.’

Matthew 5: 14-15
A Prayer for Leaders/For a Leader

May you have the grace and wisdom
to act kindly, learning
to distinguish between what is
personal and what is not.
May you be hospitable to criticism.
may you never put yourself at the centre of things.
May you act not from arrogance but out of service.
May you work on yourself
building up and refining the ways of your mind.
May those who work for you know
you see and respect them.
May you learn to cultivate the art of presence
in order to engage with those who meet you.
When someone fails or disappoints you
may the graciousness with which you engage
Be their stairway to renewal and refinement.
May you treasure the gifts of the mind
through reading and creative thinking
so that you continue as a servant of the frontier
where the new will draw its enrichment from the old,
and you never become a functionary.
May you know the wisdom of deep listening,
the healing of wholesome words,
the encouragement of the appreciative gaze,
the decorum of held dignity,
the springtime of the bleak question.
May you have a mind that loves frontiers
so that you can evoke the bright fields
that lie beyond the view of the regular eye.
May you have good friends
to mirror your blind spots.
May leadership be for you
a true adventure of growth.

Print off one copy of a blank crossword for your next leadership meeting. The team leader inserts the first word into the crossword. Pass the crossword around at the beginning of the meeting and ask staff to contribute a word pertaining to Leadership in your domain. For example, service.

At the end of the meeting, reflect on the words offered by the meeting. You can extend the boxes as required. More crossword templates can be found at: https://www.google.com.au/search?q=crossword+template&rls=com.microsoft:en-AU:IE-
Lessons on Life/The Two Wolves

An elder Cherokee Native American was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, “A fight is going on inside me ... It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person too.”

They thought about it for a minute and then one child asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee replied simply...

“The one you feed”.

Gulledge, Gregg 2008. Breaking the Cycle of Shame, p. 74

Spirit of God

May the Spirit of our God, the spirit of Wisdom and Strength rest upon us and fill us with peace.

Help us in our discussions and discernment. Guide us in what we do.

May we be inspired by love, illuminated by knowledge, strengthened by patience and at all times act intelligently and with justice towards all.

Keep us in harmony that we may act as one and know that we are gently led by a higher Presence than ourselves.

May our God bless us and our loved ones always.

Amen.

Food for the Journey, Calvary Health Care ACT, Volume II, June 2007, p. 13
Prayer for Understanding

Oh God, we pray today for a deeper understanding of the common good and what it requires of us.

Help us to look clearly into the mirror of life and there find gifts and limits and our responses to both, in our personal lives and in the organisation in which we minister.

Assist us that we may embrace the Gospel paths to which we are called and with the help of your Holy Spirit, that we may use our resources wisely for the good of all.

We ask this in Jesus’ name.

Amen.


Workday Prayer

Loving God:
May our prayer this morning assist us in preparing for the work of this day.

We pray that through our presence at this meeting today, we will help bring new awareness to our own identity, and that through our leadership we will bring enlivened understanding and meaning to the values and identity of Calvary.

Amen.

*Food for the Journey, Calvary Health Care ACT, Volume I, February, 2006, p. 21*
Human Life as a Spider Web

If you touch it anywhere,
you set the whole thing trembling –
The life that I touch for good or ill will touch another life,
and that in turn another,
until who knows where the trembling stops or in what
far place and time my touch will be felt.
Our lives are linked.
No man, no woman, is an island.

*Buechner, Frederick 1985. The Hungering Dark, p. 45. Adapted*

Leaders are architects of connectivity and integrity, who weave productive webs between people, places and things – knowledge, spirituality and dynamic, good orderly direction.
Authentic Leadership/The Grandeur of Service

If it is true that people can grow, expand their capacities, jump higher, run harder and compose greater music that means that the ultimate leadership is servant leadership, for we will produce followers who will surpass us. Runners will become coaches - to train other athletes who will break their records. Executives will hire subordinates and motivate them so well they may become their superiors.
It is not easy to adjust to such a view of the development of leaders.

So, when some people get to the top, they pull up the ladder with them. They cannot tolerate the ambition of the young, and see every subordinate as potential rival. Such executives hang on by their finger nails in organisations until the last possible moment and give their attention to fighting off rivals rather than nursing successors. It is a very foolish way to lead, as in as much we are always within one generation of extinction.

McGinnis, Alan Loy 1985. Bringing out the Best in People: how to enjoy helping others excel, p. 181

Servants Lead Out of Relationships, not by Coercion.

Servants don’t demand obedience or submission. They meet their followers at the point of need.
Servants have a common touch, maintain living contacts and demonstrate consistent concern for their followers.
Servants lead by support, not by control.
Servants give from themselves rather than take for themselves. They love and lift others rather than manipulating them.

Servants seek growth, not position.
Servants aren’t ambitious.
They keep the growth and spiritual health of others paramount.

Servants lead from love not domination. Authority, in part, grows out of ‘the consent of the governed’. Peter sounded this theme clearly: ‘tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constrained but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock’ (1 Peter 5:2.3)

Dale, Robert D. 1986. Pastoral Leadership: a handbook of resources for effective congregational leadership, pp. 34-35. Adapted
A Prayer for Courage, Wisdom, Faith and Love

Lord, grant us
Courage to do right
when doing wrong or nothing at all
would be easier.

Wisdom to say the right thing at the right time
because words have the power to help or to hurt.

Faith in the goodness of humankind
because living in doubt and fear is not living as you
meant it to be.

And, most important, Love,

The kind that gives without demanding,
Support without holding too tightly,
And understands that we are, all of us, imperfect.


Prayer

O Holy God,
We reflect this morning on your love
which permeates the entire universe.
We know that you invite us to live in love
and we do not want to respond.
We know what this day demands of us:
professional competence and integrity,
courtesy and respect in our relationships,
pastoral responsibility for staff, patients and clients.
Help us to understand that all these are our way of living in love,
our way of laying down our lives today
minute by minute, hour by hour,
Amen.

Little Company of Mary Prayer
A Reflection by Archbishop Oscar Romero

How beautiful will be the day, when all the people understand that their work, their job, is sacred work.

That just as I celebrate and give witness to God’s love at the altar, so each carpenter gives witness to God’s love at his workbench.

And each metalworker, each professional, each doctor with scalpel, the market woman at her stand, are witnessing to God’s love.

How many cabdrivers, I know, listen to this message in their cabs:

You are a witness to God’s love at the wheel, my friend, if you work with honesty, consecrating that taxi of yours to God, bearing a message of peace to all who ride with you…


Adapted
Prayer for Leaders’ Retreat

Loving God, as we gather in this place of learning, we remember that we are always and already in your presence:

We pray:
For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who yearn to be reconnected to their homes and homelands
Holy Spirit, God of justice and love, hear us.
For all the organisations we work for and work with
God of justice and love, hear us.
For the staff who continue to work hard this week in our absence
God of justice and love, hear us.
For all those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless
God of justice and love, hear us.
For those who live with a mental illness
God of justice and love, hear us.
For those who feel that there is no hope
God of justice and love, hear us.
For our families and friends whose love enables us to be here today
God of justice and love, hear us.
We pray for all those who support the work of Catholic health, social services and aged care
God of justice and love, hear us.
We pray for all of us gathered here today
God of justice and love, hear us.

Loving God, hear our prayers and the yearnings of our hearts as we gather in your presence here today.

Amen.

_Little Company of Mary Retreat Prayer_
For Work
May the light of your soul bless your work
with love and warmth of heart.
May you see in what you do
the beauty of your soul.
May the sacredness of your work bring light and renewal
to those who work with you
and to those who see and receive your work.
May your work never exhaust you.
May it release wellsprings of refreshment,
inspiration and excitement.
May you never become lost in bland absences.
May the day never burden.
May dawn find hope in your heart,
approaching your new day with dreams,
possibilities and promises.
May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.
May you go into the night blessed,
sheltered and protected.
May your soul calm, console and renew you.


Prayer
Jesus, help us to enter into the joyful
dimensions of our work.
Let us not be so involved and serious
about our work that we miss the many joys
and pleasures that are inherent in it.
Lighten us up when we are feeling our work’s heaviness.
May we remember that we need
balance in our lives,
that laughter and leisure are essential
for our total health.
Take us to sources of zest and enthusiasm
without guilt or hesitation.
May our work become one of the
playgrounds of our lives!
Amen.

Rupp, Joyce 2000. Out of the Ordinary: prayers, poems and reflections for every season, p. 147. Adapted

Knowledge can be enlarged and deepened only by love

Sándor Ferenczi
Prayers appear in many colours shapes and sizes
As an intentional conversation/encounter with God
However God is for us

SMRH
10. BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS FOR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

To see God

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:12

A Prayer for Guidance/Loving Tenderly, Acting Justly

Loving God, we delight in our call to be disciples of Jesus, heralds of God’s justice and peace. We confess that our hearts are often restless and in need of your love and grace. Help us to open our hearts in the spirit of ongoing conversion as we work in the healing ministry of the church. May we learn to love tenderly, act justly, and walk humbly with you. We ask you to shepherd us beyond our wants, our fears, ourselves, and lead us into newness of life and purpose. We ask this through Jesus, your son and our brother.

Amen


Graduation Prayer/A Graduate’s Prayer

Father, I have knowledge so will you show me now how to use it wisely and to find a way somehow to make the world I live in a little better place, and to make life with its problems a bit easier to face grant me faith and courage and put purpose in my days and show me how to serve Thee in the most effective ways, so all my education, my knowledge and my skill may find their true fulfilment if I learn to do Thy will, and may I ever be aware in everything I do that knowledge comes from learning and wisdom comes from You.

Amen.

The Work of Committed Hearts and Minds/With Glad and Generous Hearts

Let us pray:
God of Gladness, God of generosity
You see the difficult work of caring for those who are sick and in need.
You know the stress that comes from schedules, budgets and regulations
You understand the toll that caregivers pay as they struggle to heal the hurting
And yet you are the one who calls us to be caregivers
You inspire us to serve. You fire our hearts with compassion for those who suffer.
You choose us to be carriers of your healing love.
Strengthen our bodies for the physical work of caring.
Sharpen our minds and senses with greater perception of the need of others.
And give us glad and generous hearts that we may join with our colleagues in loving community.
A community that supports us as we support others, heals us as we seek to bring healing to those in need.
Amen.

Blessing/Prayer of Letting Go and Blessing

May each of us here present
receive a blessing for all that may be required of us
that love may drive out fear
and that peace and contentment may be in our hearts
and through us may spread over the face of the Earth
the blessings of God,
giver of Life,
bearer of Pain,
maker of Love,
be with us and all whom we love,
both living and departed
Now and forever.

Stouder, Donald Bruce 2004. Along the Thomasine Path: rituals, readings and resources for the
post-Christian, post-denominational follower of Jesus, p. 58. Adapted

Prayer for Students/Prayer of Students

Father of Light and Wisdom,
thank you for giving me
a mind that can understand
and a heart that can love.

Help me to keep learning every day of my life –
no matter what the subject may be.
Let me be convinced that all knowledge leads to you
and let me know how to find you and love you
in all the things you have made.

Encourage me when the studies are difficult
and when I am tempted to give up
Enlighten me when my brain is slow
and help me to grasp the truth held out to me.

Grant me the grace to put my knowledge to use
in building the kingdom of God on earth
so that I may enter the kingdom of God in heaven.
Amen.

The Great Spirit Prayer

Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind, whose breath gives life to all the world. Hear me; I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.

Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that comes towards me.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of helping others.
Help me find compassion without empathy overwhelming me.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy - Myself.
Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

Author unknown

For the Family and Friends of a Suicide

As you huddle around the torn silence, each by this lonely deed exiled to a solitary confinement of soul, may some small glow from what has been lost return like the kindness of candlelight.

As your eyes strain to sift this sudden wall of dark and no one can say why in such a forsaken, secret way, this death was sent for ...

May one of the lovely hours of memory return like a field of ease among these gravelled days.

May the Angel of Wisdom enter this ruin of absence and guide your minds to receive this bitter chalice so that you do not damage your selves by attending only at the hungry altar of regret and anger and guilt.

May you be given some inkling that there could be something else at work and that what to you now seems dark, destructive and forlorn, might be a destiny that looks different from inside the internal script.

May vision be granted to you to see this with the eyes of providence. May your loss become a sanctuary where new presence will dwell to refine and enrich the rest of your life with courage and compassion.

And may your lost loved one enter into the beauty of eternal tranquillity, in that place where there is no more sorrow or separation or mourning or tears.

A Prayer

God, in this world of mixed and changing values, I ask for myself, for others the wisdom to distinguish between the important and the unimportant, the true and the false, the trivial and the eternal.

Sometimes I do not know which way to turn. There are so many claims on my time, so many demands on my attention.

Life pulls me in so many directions, and presents me with so many possibilities. At times I am confused and don’t know what to do.

It is then that I need you, for you are a light for my path and a lamp in the darkness of my mind.

God, I want to be your faithful disciple, help me to see what to do. Give me a listening ear and an open heart to follow you wherever you want me to go.

*Author unknown in* Gleeson, Christopher 2003. *A Canopy of Stars: some reflections for the journey,* p. 141

Retirement Serenity Prayer

God grant me the *serenity* To look upon the past with pride, Satisfaction and a sense of Accomplishment

The *courage* to look to the future with energy, optimism and countless opportunities

and *wisdom* to live every moment of everyday to the fullest.

Prayer of Trust

Lord Jesus Christ, you understand all about pain, suffering and loneliness. Strengthen me Lord when I cannot feel your presence in my darkness. Help me to believe that even now, you are leading me out of the darkness into your light. Amen.

Food for the Journey, Calvary Health Care ACT Vol. 2 June 2007. Adapted

Today/Prayer for Strength

Every day I need you Lord, but today especially I need some extra strength to face whatever is to be. This day I need to feel you near – to fortify my courage and overcome my fear. By myself I cannot meet the challenge of the hour. There are times when human beings need a higher power – to help them bear what must be borne. And so, dear Lord, I pray – hold on to my trembling hand and be with me today. Amen.


Prayers Before Surgery

Loving God, help me to trust in your care. Fill me with patience and hope, and let me trust in those who heal in your name. When I am afraid, remind me that you are always with me. Take away my anxiety and fill my heart with peace. Amen.

Food for the Journey, Calvary Health Care ACT Vol. 2 June 2007. Adapted
O God, originator and giver of life, I thank you for this hospital: for the care and attention that have been shown to me by the nurses and other members of staff, for the skill of the doctors and others who have worked together to diagnose my condition, for those who in the past have laboured to conquer disease and pain, and for those who so labour today.

O Lord, further the work of all who engage in healing. Especially I pray that your Hand may guide the surgeon, the anaesthetist and all others who play any part in the operation I am to undergo. Bless them with wisdom and skill, O Lord.

Help me to believe that all things work together for good, so that I may be conscious of your blessing throughout this experience.

By your presence overcome all fear, so that I can entrust myself to your care before I go to sleep knowing that You,

O God, Who never sleeps, will be watching over me.

And should I suffer pain or discomfort when I awake, give me courage and serenity.

Amen.

Food for the Journey, Calvary Health Care ACT Vol. 2 June 2007. Adapted

Infant Death

Barely here,
but for love made flesh.
Now without breath
a mother’s labour lost
a family’s devotion
still
born to eternal life.

SMRH
Praise and Thanks

I thank you, God, that I have lived
in this great world and known it’s many joys;
the song of birds, the strong, sweet scent of hay
and the cooling breezes in the secret dusk,
the flaming sunsets at the close of day,
hills, and lonely, heather-covered moors,
music at night, and moonlight on the sea,
the heat of waves upon the rocky shore
and wild, white spray, flung high in ecstasy:
the faithful eyes of dogs, and treasured books,
the love of kin and fellowship of friends,
and all that makes life dear and beautiful.

I thank You, too, that there has come to me
a little heartache and the loneliness
that comes with parting, and the word, ‘Goodbye,’
dawn breaking after dreary hours of pain,
when I discovered that night’s gloom must yield
and morning light break through to me again.
Because of these and other blessing poured
unasked upon my wondering head,
because I know there is yet to come
an even richer and more glorious life,
and most of all, because Thine only Son
once sacrificed life’s loveliness for me-
I thank You, God, that I have lived.

Elizabeth Craven
Hewett, Beth L. 2014. Good Words: memorializing through a eulogy, p. 190. Adapted
Traditional Gaelic Blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Moon and stars pour out their healing light on you
Deep peace to you.

Go where your best prayers take you.

Frederick Buechner
MARY POTTER QUOTES

Sometimes it’s helpful to share words of wisdom as affirmation from a confident source. Here are some quotes from Venerable Mary Potter that may be useful when an incisive, yet tender reflection is needed. Many more can be found on Calvary Connect.

Wisdom of Venerable Mary Potter

‘Each and every one of us has a mission from God.’ Mary’s Call.
‘We may not have much to give, but we can give kind words, loving looks, cheerful smiles.’
‘Mary’s love for us is the very form of purest love known among (us): Mother-love.’ Mary’s Call.
‘The whole purpose of our lives is to be for others what Mary was for her Son on Calvary.’
‘Let us go forth upon our mission of love. Let us spread love wherever we go.’
‘Suffering is the touchstone of love.’
‘We were not made for time only, but for eternity.’

‘Thank God always for the happiness and beauty of life – it is beautiful.’
Venerable Mary Potter’s Last Words.

‘When God infuses joy into us let us cultivate it and let us try to give it to others.’

‘Think well of us, and never allow any word to pass to the prejudice of anyone – be always the peace maker.’ – From Venerable Mary Potter’s Last Words.

‘May the mother-love of God, come to us and replenish us with fullness, inflame us with its fire.’

‘There is no greater power in life than love.’

‘Through Mary, Jesus first came to us, and through Mary he still loves to give himself to us.’ – The Path of Mary.

‘If our union with Mary is so close, by reason of our union with Jesus, let us correspond with the union thus formed by God himself and deliver ourselves to Mary.’

‘With fresh vigour we go out to our next work, no matter what, filled with faith in what we do, charity towards those we assist, and hope in God for whom we labour.’

Reference List to Mary Potter Quotes

2), 4), 5), 11), 15)
Calvary Health care ACT (n.d.) Reconciliation Action Plan 2013-2015, pp. 3, 5, 6, 7, 12

6)
Scanlon, Mary (n.d.) Mission of love.

9), 12)
The Little Company of Mary Hospital Foundation 2012. Envision 3 (1), p. 11, 3

13), 14)
The Path of Mary (n.d.). Chapter one: To Jesus through Mary.

1), 8)
Little Company of Mary (n.d.). What is a vocation?
Hope is patience with the lamp lit

Tertullian