

Poems/Prayers related to grief & bereavement

The following are a wide selection of reflections that have been read at funerals, during bereavement or at anniversary Masses. As each person's grief is unique, so too is their response to a particular prayer, poem or reflection. So, take your time and read the reflections that strike a chord in your heart. And feel free to share these with those who might similarly benefit.

Where possible we have traced and credited all authors here..However, many of these, come from funeral booklets etc, with no references. If any additional credit needs to be added please contact the Pastoral centre (reception@ldpc.ie). Thank you.

Do not hurry as you walk with grief.
It does not help the journey
Walk slowly,
Pausing often.

Do not hurry as you walk with grief
Be not disturbed by memories that come unbidden.
Swiftly forgive and let Christ speak for you unspoken words.
Unfinished conversation will be resolved in him.

Be not disturbed.
Be gentle with the one who walks with grief.
If it is you, be gentle with yourself.
Swiftly forgive, walk slowly, pausing often.
Take time, be gentle, pausing often

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there; I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow,
I am the sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there; I did not die.
Mary Elizabeth Frye – 1932

Lord, someone we have loved has been taken from us,
Someone precious, irreplaceable.
And we know that there are no words we can say at this moment
to express what we are feeling,

No words that can alleviate our sorrow
Or take away the pain.

So we come this evening simply to bring you our grief, the shock and the pain,
The emptiness, the anger and the despair,
The loneliness, the fear and the uncertainty
Which at times still overwhelms us.
We come bringing those honestly before you,
And asking for strength in the times of darkness.

Hold on to us,
Even when we find it hard to hold on to you.
Be very near,
Even when we feel you to be very far away.
Support us in the weeks and months and yes even the years ahead.

Grant us your comfort, as you have promised,
Until the time finally comes when we can look back
Not just with pain but thanksgiving
Not just with sorrow but with joy.

Lord, support us all the day long,
Until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes,
And the busy world is hushed,
And the fever of life is over,
And our work is done.
Then in your mercy,
Grant us a safe lodging,
And a holy rest,
And peace at the last.

When I am gone, release me, let me go,
I have so many things to see and do,
You mustn't tie yourself to me in tears
Be happy that we had so many years,
I gave to you my love, you can only guess,
How much you gave to me in happiness,
I thank you for the love you each have shown,
But now its time I travel on alone.
So grieve awhile for me if grieve you must,
Then let your grief be comforted by trust,
It 's only for awhile that we must part ,
So bless the memories within your heart,
I won't be fa r away , for life goes on,
So if you need me, call and I will come.
Though you can't see or touch me,
I'll be near;
And if you listen with your heart you'll hear
All my love around you, soft and clear .

And then when you must come this way alone,
I'll greet you with a smile and a "WELCOME HOME"

Death is nothing at all

Death is nothing at all
I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I , and you are you .
Whatever we were to each other,
that we still are.
Call me by my old fami liar name,
speak to me in the easy way
which you always used.
Put no difference in your tone,
wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.
Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Let my name be ever the household word
that it always was,
Let it be spoken without effect ,
without the trace of a shadow on it.
Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as i t ever was;
there is unbroken continuity.
Why should I be out of mind
because I am out of sight?
I am waiting for you,
for an interval, somewhere very near,
just around the corner.
All is well.

Some Time

Some time at eve, when the tide is low,
I shall slip my moorings and sail away
With no response to a friendly hail,
In the silent hush of the twilight pale,
When the night stoops down to embrace the day
And the voices call in the water's flow —
Some time at eve, when the tide is low,
I shall slip my moorings and sail away
Through purple shadows that darkly trail
O'er the ebbing tide of the unknown sea,
And a ripple of waters to tell the tale
Of a lonely voyager, sailing away
To mystic isles, where at anchor lay
The craft of those who have sailed before,
O'er the unknown sea to the unknown shore.

A few who have watched me sail away
Will miss my craft from the busy bay;
Some friendly barks that were anchored near,
Some loving souls that my heart held dear,
In silent sorrow will drop a tear:
But I shall have peacefully furled my sail
In moorings sheltered from storm and gale
And greeting the friends who have sailed before
O'er the unknown sea to the unknown shore.

Anon

I can't change what you're going through,
I have no words to make a difference,
No answers or solutions
To make things easier for you.
But if it helps in any way,
I want to say I care.
Please know that even when you're lonely,
You're not alone.
I'll be here,
Supporting you with all my thoughts,
Cheering for you with all my strength,
Praying for you with all my heart.
For whatever you need,
For as long as it takes —
Lean on my love.
Kevin Mayhew

“Reflection for all our deceased parents, relatives and friends.”

You can shed tears that they have gone
Or you can smile because they lived.

You can close your eyes and pray that they will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that they have left.

Your heart can be empty because you cannot see them
Or you can be full of the love that you shared with them.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember them and only that they have gone
Or you can cherish their memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what they would have wanted —

Smile, love, play and go on.

David Harkins

Words spoken at a memorial mass for a five-year-old girl named Grace.

"The great tree stood circled by its wide branches, its bark marked with time and weather. The little tawny golden leaf was sheltered by the tree's great size and endurance, but the tree knew from its wisdom that all leaves had their season.

"The older leaves were already preparing for their descent to the moist earth; grumbling and sighing, aware of their crimped and broken edges and perforations by the beaks of birds. The discolouration of age had marred their original greenness and freshness.

"The old tree loved the little golden leaf. Age had never marked it or robbed it of its translucent, russet, delicate beauty. It had grace and ease of form. It whispered little stories to the tree, funny observations about the other leaves and daft things overheard from passing humans that made the tree shake its branches with gusts of laughter.

"The tree also told the little leaf stories that it had heard carried by the wind and human voices over decades....a sparrow falling was counted, and hairs on the human head numbered, and tears turned to joy.

"The leaf's favourite story was of a loving Shepherd who gathered in his little lambs. There was a place prepared that the human eye had never seen, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the mind of man; a place for those who loved the Good Shepherd. The fragmented and broken were made whole in this wonderful place.

"The time had come for the little leaf to flutter to the ground, dancing, floating, playing, spiralling and landing with a graceful pirouette.

"The great tree observed the spot where it had landed and marked it as sacred ground, and then allowed its own roots to relax into the welcoming soil because it knew the story of renewal and resurrection and was confident in all the comforting words the wind had carried down the ages about life and having it abundantly, and death having no sting." *M.G.*

And God Said ...

I said, "God, I hurt."
And God said, "I know."

I said, "God, I cry a lot. "
And God said, "That is why I gave you tears."

I said, "God, I am so depressed. "
And God said, "That is why I gave you sunshine."

I said, "God, life is so hard."
And God said, "That is why I gave you loved ones."

I said, "God, It hurts."
And God said, "I know."

I said, "God, my loved one died."

And God said, "So did mine."

I said, "God, it is such a loss."
And God said, "I saw mine nailed to a cross"

I said, "God, but your loved one lives."
And God said, "So does yours."

I said, "God, where are they now?"
And God said, "Mine is on my Right, and yours is in the Light."

I said, "God, it hurts."
And God said, "I know."

Posted on the wall at the Oklahoma City Bombing Site by K.C. and Mike Kuzmic

Think of Me

And when time has come between us
And I can no longer be by your side
Think not, but that in some way, I shall still be with you.
Not one sun will rise or set, nor will a season pass,
But I shall look as you make your life's journey
I will share in your joys and sorrows
Which must come even as the sun and the rain.
Walk in the fields and among the trees
Where the gentle breeze can touch your face
And know that I am in its caress.
Look for me in the face of a flower,
And breathe deeply of my fragrance
And when at any time, you can listen to the songbirds
They will speak to you of me.
Though grief must have its time, let it tarry not, or else,
It will keep you from finding me again.
Believe in this truth I give unto you
For I will be with God
And God is in all things.

If Tomorrow Starts Without Me

If tomorrow starts without me,
And I'm not there to see,
If the sun should rise and find your eyes
All filled with tears for me;
I wish so much you wouldn't cry
The way you did today,
While thinking of the many things

We didn't get to say.

But when tomorrow starts without me,
Please try to understand,
That an angel came and called my name,
And took me by the hand.
But when I walked through Heaven's gates,
I felt so much at home,
When God looked down and smiled at me,
He said, "This is eternity
And all I've promised you"
Today your life on earth is past.
But here life starts anew.
So when tomorrow starts without me
Don't think we're far apart,
For every time you think of me,
I'm right here, in your heart.

Gone From My Sight

I am standing upon the seashore.
A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.
She is an object of beauty and strength.
I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea
and sky come to mingle with each other.
Then, someone at my side says; "There, she is gone!"
"Gone where?"
Gone from my sight.
That is all.

She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just
as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port. Her diminished size is in me, not
in her.

And just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There, she is gone!"; there are other
eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout; "Here she
comes!"

And that is dying.

by Henry Van Dyke, a 19th Century clergyman, educator, poet, and religious writer.

Requiem

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.
This be the verse you gave for me:

Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more, day by day,
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that I once had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be said.
by Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Epitaph on a Child

Here, freed from pain, secure from misery, lies
A child, the darling of his parents' eyes:
A gentler Lamb ne'er sported on the plain,
A fairer flower will never bloom again:
Few were the days allotted to his breath;
Now let him sleep in peace his night of death.
by Thomas Gray (1716-1771)

To Those I Love

If I should ever leave you,
Whom I love
To go along the silent way. . .
Grieve not.
Nor speak of me with tears.
But laugh and talk of me
As if I were beside you there.
(I'd come. . .I'd come,
Could I but find a way!
But would not tears and
And grief be barriers?)

And when you hear a song
Or see a bird I loved,
Please do not let the thought of me
Be sad. . .for I am loving you
Just as I always have. . .
You were so good to me!
There are so many things
I wanted still to do. . .
So many things I wanted to say
to you. . . Remember that
I did not fear. . . It was
Just leaving you
That was so hard to face.
We cannot see beyond. . .
But this I know:
I loved you so. . .
'twas heaven here with you!
by Isla Paschal Richardson.

I did not die

Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there, I did not die.

Author unknown.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor aught by love from thee give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way reply;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.

Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,
That when we live no more we may live ever.

by Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

Songs of the Death of Children (Kindertotenlieder)

You must not shut the night inside you,
But endlessly in light the dark immerse.
A tiny lamp has gone out in my tent--
I bless the flame that warms the universe.

by Friedrich Ruckert (1788-1866)

Turn Again to Life

If I should die and leave you here a while,
be not like others sore undone,
who keep long vigil by the silent dust.
For my sake turn again to life and smile,
nerving thy heart and trembling hand
to do something to comfort other hearts than thine.
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine
and I perchance may therein comfort you.

by Mary Lee Hall,

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Your Peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow Love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

Crossing the Bar

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness or farewell,
When I embark;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

On Death

Kahlil Gibran

You would know the secret of death.
But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?
The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.
If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.
For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.
In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;
And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring.
Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.
Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose
hand is to be laid upon him in honour.
Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king?
Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?
For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?
And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise
and expand and seek God unencumbered?
Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.
And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.
And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

RESURRECTION

Ronald Rolheiser

"I never suspected
Resurrection
To be so painful
To leave me weeping
With joy

To have met you, alive and smiling, outside
An empty tomb.
With regret
Not because I've lost you
But because I've lost you in how I had you-
In understandable, touchable, kissable, Clingable flesh
Not as fully Lord, but as graspably human.
I want to cling, despite your protest
Cling to your body
Cling to your, and my, clingable humanity
Cling to what we had, our past.
But I know that...if I cling
You cannot ascend and
I will be left clinging to your former self ...
unable to receive your present spirit."
