



DYING WELL

ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE PARISH

NOVEMBER 1, 2022

GATHERING PRAYER...

I pray that you will have the blessing of being consoled and sure about your own death.

May you know in your soul that there is no need to be afraid.

When your time comes, may you be given every blessing and shelter that you need.

May there be a beautiful welcome for you in the home that you are going to.

You are not going somewhere strange. You are going back to the home that you never left.

May you have a wonderful urgency to live your life to the full.

May you live compassionately and creatively and transfigure everything that is negative within you and about you.

When you come to die may it be after a long life.

May you be peaceful and happy and in the presence of those who really care for you.

May your going be sheltered and your welcome assured.

May your soul smile in the embrace of your anam cara. (Soul-Friend)

-John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara*

A READING from St. Paul to Timothy:

As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone.

I have fought the good fight to the end.

I have run the race to the finish.

I have kept the faith.

All there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord will give to me on that Day, and not only to me, but to all those who have longed for his Appearing.

Do your best to come and see me as soon as you can.

All Saints Day



We are all called to be saints ... saints on earth and saints in heaven

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

With blessed assurance
we are all nearing home.



DYING WELL

- **PREPARE** for our own death with more awareness and confidence.
- **ACCOMPANY** our loved ones in their dying process. Learn how to be present.
- **EMBRACE** our own death as a **FINAL GIFT**- a legacy of faith and hope that will be remembered and cherished.
- **SPEAK** about dying and death and intuitions of eternal life.
- **BEFRIEND** our mortality. Death can be a peak, transformative experience.

PRAYING OUR DYING PROCESS



Sometimes people are very worried about dying.
There is no need to be afraid.
When the moment of your dying comes,
you will be given everything that you need
to make that journey
in a graceful, elegant and trusting way.

John O'Donohue, Anam Cara p. 211

1. USE TIME WISELY

Kathleen Dowling Singh invites us to be open to the grace that comes in and through our dying process:

“We become different beings through the transformative power of our **insight into the dying process**. We become larger, more integrated, and somehow more real with this expansion of our horizons and remapping of our boundaries.

We enter levels that allow our now deeper being to open to what is – giving and taking, in living and in dying, with fewer gimmicks and simpler truth, with less frivolity and more joy, with less suffering and more gratitude”

(K. Singh, *The Grace in Dying*, pg. 6).

2. PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS: I ACCEPT WHAT IS.

Lesson one of 'living well until we die' invites us to live fully every present moment. Keep choosing to JUST BE in this moment, in this place and with this person and let it be, accepting everything just as it is. This is already a high spiritual practice.

When you begin to practice this way of being consistently, you will start to notice a **deep contentment and inner peace flow** into your awareness. This peace not only sustains you but will comfort and strengthen you. God is very near.

Mysteriously, you will come to know and participate in your own dying process at a more contemplative depth that transcends your fears.

3. PARTICIPATE IN OUR DYING PROCESS

Choose to be actively conscious, making our own choices throughout the days and weeks ahead.

Participate in your dying process with all the uniqueness of your personality.

The work of our “dying well” includes these four profound sentences:

1. I'm sorry
2. I love you.
3. Thank you.
4. Goodbye.

REFLECTION #1

“I’m sorry.”

SAY to oneself... to loved ones...



Others may need to say “I’m sorry”
to the dying person....

PASTORAL HELPS

- When ready, you can tell your ‘life story’ to a chaplain, pastoral care worker, or hospice companion.
- If you wish, you can ask for a visit with your spiritual director or a trusted friend who can assist with a healing of these painful pent-up memories.
- Celebrate the Sacrament of the sick with close family. The prayers for courage and strength offer support and grace.
- Ideally, saying the words “I’m sorry” to the person who needs to hear it from you, is the most healing and restorative of peace.

Dying is a contemplative experience... watch and wait,
keep vigil in silent prayer...





Releasing and letting go the human 'drama' of our egoic consciousness...

I release you. I release me.

I set you free. I set me free.

I love you. I love me.

What does it all really matter in the big scheme of things?

Can I let it go and let it be?

PRAY for deep healing of past regrets and hurts.



CONVERSATION



Do you have a story where a dying person - or you - spoke to a loved one about past hurts, broken relationships or deep regrets? How did that feel to ask for forgiveness? To offer forgiveness?

REFLECTION #2

“I love you.”



LOVE is manifested in simple togetherness; in holding hands; saying a few words; bringing flowers, sending cards; sharing long embraces; in smiles and tears ...

“LOVE NEVER ENDS”

“I love you.”



These words brand the soul of each one of us with such a deep sense of belonging, of being cared for, of being connected by the only mystery of our beingness that will live on beyond the grave – for all eternity.

LOVE NEVER ENDS...

Ask our loved ones to remember us when they pass into the Kingdom...



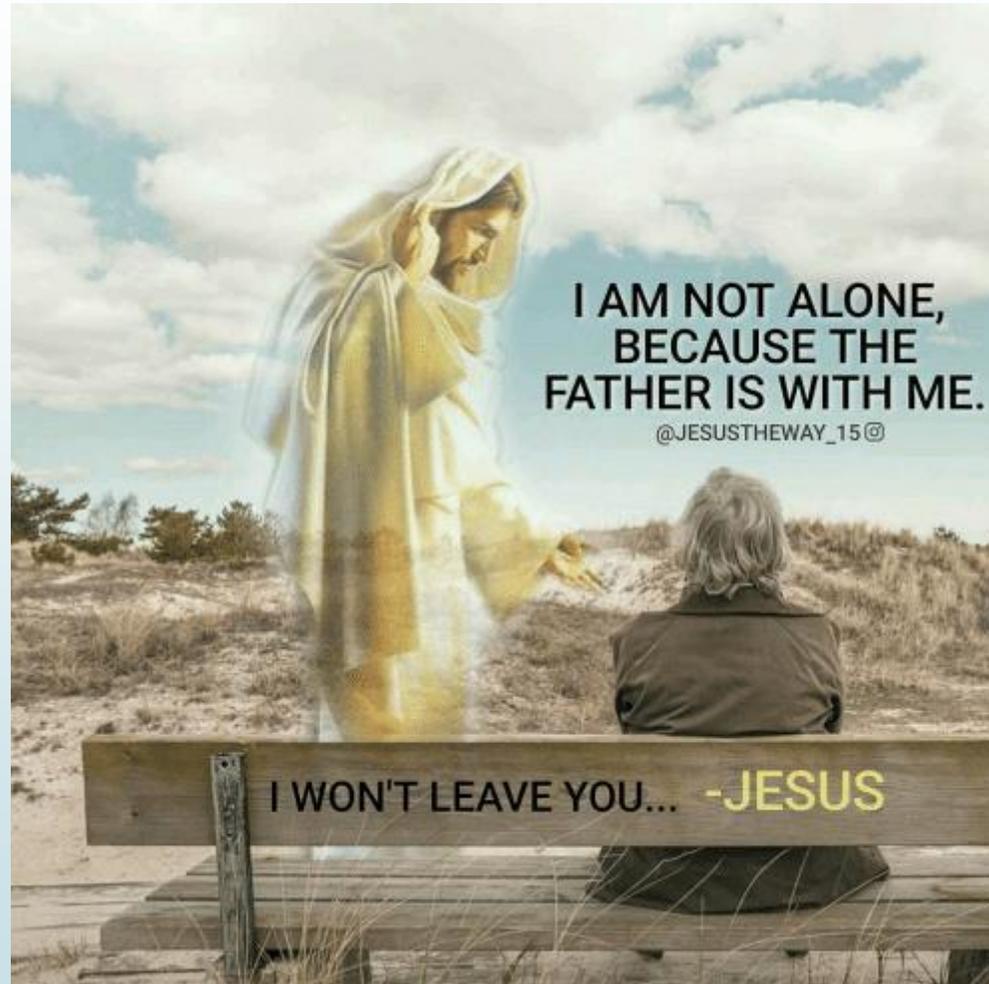
Sufferings accepted well
are like the wood
which serves to kindle
the fire of love.

To the extent
that you endure faithfully
and make good use of your crosses,
you will see the sacred fire of love
grow in your heart.

J.P. Medaille. SJ
Maxim of Perfection 5.2

As hard and as unwanted as this **‘kindling wood’** is we need to embrace it and let it go. That process lightens us, without destroying us! It sets us free!

I will be with you that is My promise...



PAUSE AND REST IN A SILENT PEACE...



CONVERSATION

I love
you

Do you have a story where a dying person - or you - spoke or wrote to a loved one these simple words, “I love you”?

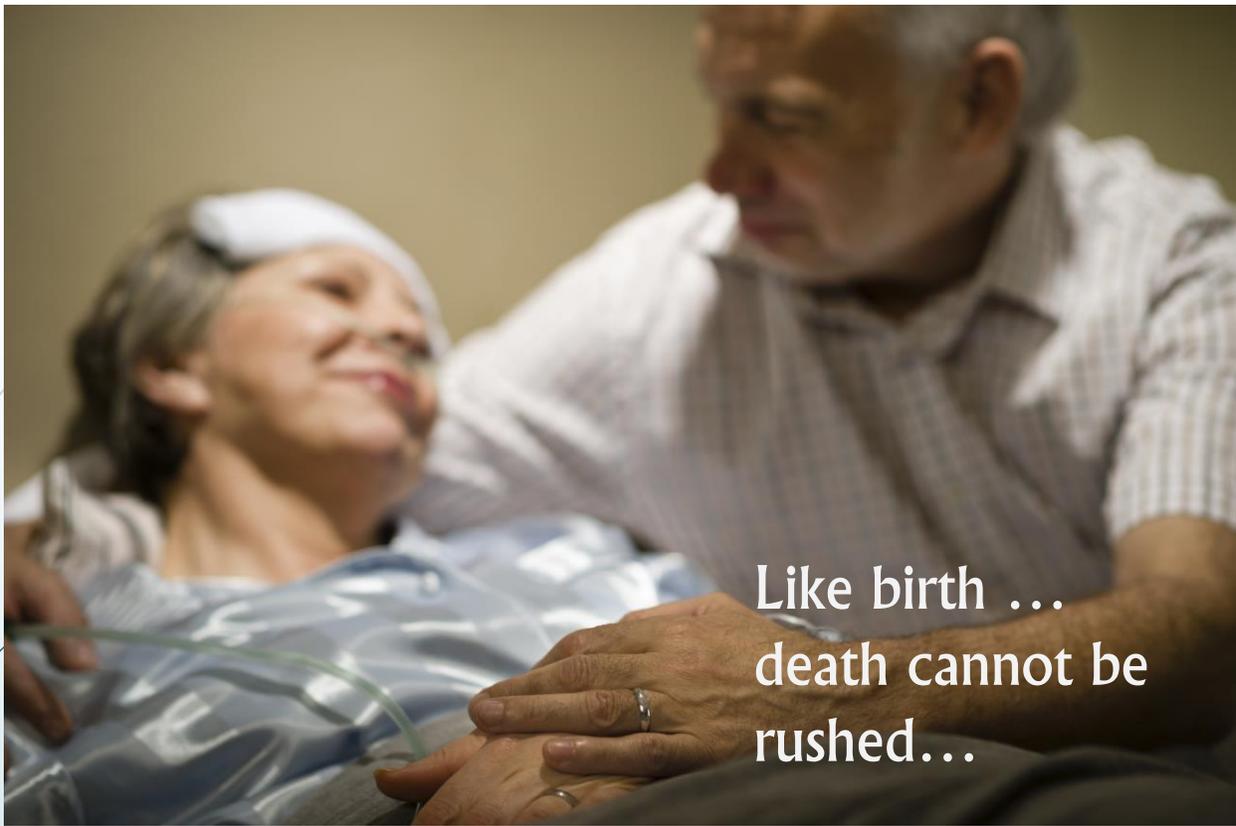
How did that feel to receive these words? To offer these words?

REFLECTION # 3

“Thank you.”



Gratitude is a gift of the dying process.
The person can now just let life be.
Acceptance is slipping into one's consciousness!



Like birth ...
death cannot be
rushed...

As the work of one's dying moves along there comes a time of acceptance and surrender... Often with urgency and with eloquence... the dying person speaks with fondness and ease - a tender and heartfelt "thank you" - to family and friends, to care-givers and doctors...

These 'last words' are precious and remembered!

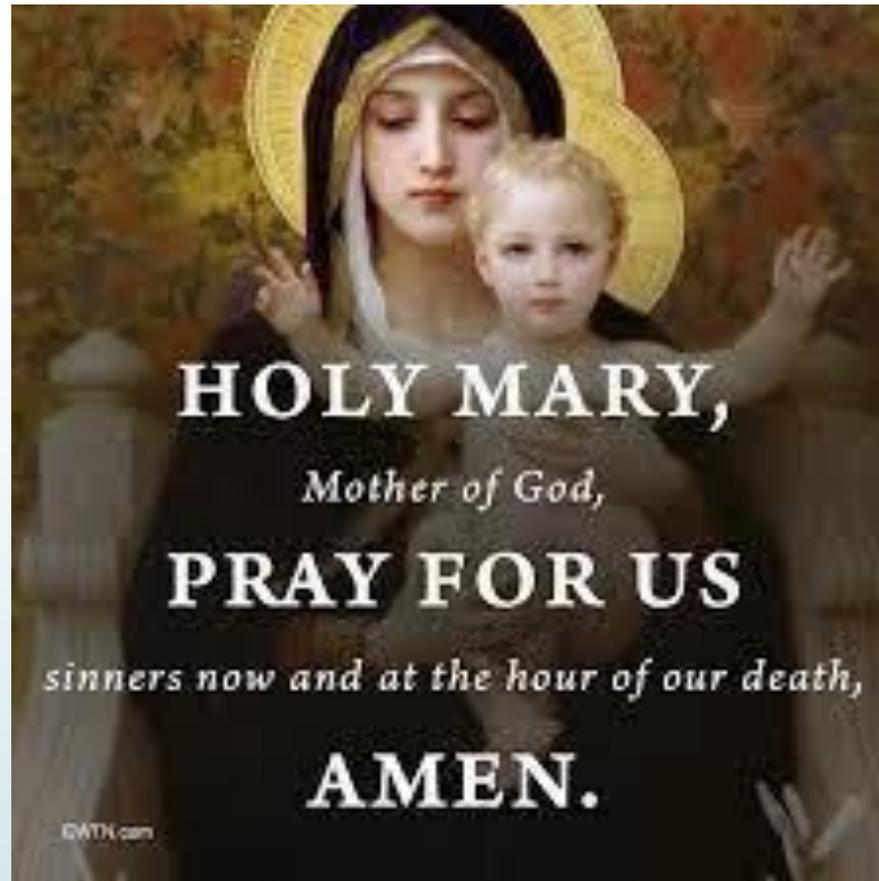
Midwives of death ... coaching the dying ...

“Don’t be afraid. Your life work is done here. Have courage.
Follow the Light. God is waiting for you. When your body is ready
to let go, let it happen.”



A patient gave angel pins to all her caregivers...

“Do small things with great love.” Mother Teresa



Prayer for guidance



CONVERSATION

*thank
you*

Do you have a story where a dying person - or you – spoke or wrote a ‘Thank you’. How did that happen?

REFLECTION # 4

“Goodbye.”



“Dying is safe. You are safe. Your loved one is safe.”

- Kathleen Dowling Singh, hospice worker and author of *The Grace in Dying*

Prepare WAKE and FUNERAL

- With a family member you might want to prepare the readings and songs to be used at your funeral celebration.
- Do you want to write letters to your grandchildren or friends.
- A family member might want to start creating a photo DVD of life events that celebrate your earthly journey.
- Leave your material affairs in good order: the will and estate plans, legacy.

The Grace in Dying: How We Are Transformed Spiritually As We Die

Kathleen Dowling Singh discovered a sequence of phases or qualities that signals a dying person entering the final stages of spiritual and psychological transformation. She names them ...

- Relaxation
- Withdrawal
- Radiance
- Interiority – a time of going inward
- Silence
- Sacred
- Transcendence
- Knowing
- Intensity
- Perfection

A close-up photograph of a young woman with dark hair, wearing a dark patterned top, kissing an elderly woman with white hair on the forehead. The young woman has her eyes closed and a gentle expression. The elderly woman is looking slightly to the right. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light. On the left side of the overall image, there is a dark blue arrow pointing right and several thin, light blue curved lines.

*Go with God. Let the
celebration begin!*

Do not let your heart
be troubled or
afraid....

Jesus, My God and my All



“Jesus, I surrender myself to you. Take care of everything.”



CONVERSATION

Goodbyes
are not forever,
are not the end;
it simply means
I'll miss you
until we meet again.

Do you have a story of BEING WITH a dying loved one as they lay dying. How did you both say your goodbyes?

Death – Welcome Home



Pope Francis:

“Heaven isn’t a ‘fairy tale’ –
it’s an embrace with God.”

THIS IS OUR EASTER FAITH

We believe that having died with Christ we shall return to live with him.

(Romans 6:8)

In our personal death we arrive at the completion of our humanity and are welcomed Home into the loving arms of God.

DEATH is a moment of:

Maximum consciousness

Optimum freedom

Definitive decision

Perfect encounter with God.

- (Nemeck and Coombs, *The Spiritual Journey*)



O Death, where is thy sting?

Death in faith and in experience is the summation of our life; the salvific event of our life, for it is God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves. God wrenches it all out so that all that is left is God and me. No more limitation, no more holding back from consummate union.

- Ladislav Boros, *Facing the Future*

Closing Prayer

Loving God, may we be granted the grace to embrace our own dying and death as a fulfillment of our earthly journeys. May we be set free of our fears and regrets and step across the threshold with gratitude for the enormous GIFT of our earthly lives. May we join in song with all the saints, “Truly, my home, the house of God, as long as I live.” (Psalm 23:6)

We make our prayer, in Jesus’ name. Amen.



THANK YOU
Knights of Columbus
St. John the Apostle Parish
Ottawa.

Credits: Music from CD by Karen Lahaise "Songs for the Soul".