

Cold Moon Ritual

December 2020



As a bird soars high
In the free holding of the wind,
Clear of the certainty of ground,
Opening to the imagination of wings
Into the grace of emptiness
To fulfil new voyagings,
May your life awaken
To the call of its freedom ...

J. O'Donohue

Opening Prayer

In the quiet of the night,
we choose to be still.
We reflect on our day and give thanks:
for the low winter sun,
for the sharp north wind,
for the moon that illuminates our darkness.

(A moment of silence)

May we find forgiveness for:
beauty we did not notice,
words that were not kind,
compassion we failed to embrace.

(A moment of silence)

We welcome the night.
May it hide us, transform us,
and free us to find treasures of darkness.

Stark County Holidays
by Mary Oliver

Our mother's kingdom does not fall,
But like her old piano wanders
Slowly and finally out of tune.
There are so many things to do
She rarely plays it anymore,
But there were years of Bach and Strauss;
The cords flew black and rich and round
With meaning through our windy house
We fell asleep, we wove our dreams
In that good wilderness of sound.

At Christmas, when we all come home,
The table's stretched with boards and laid
With linen; in a festive ring
We sit like heroes trading tales.
But lately in a little while,
Among the talk of art or war,
A kind of hesitation comes;
A silence echoes everything.

Afterward we rise and file
Behind our mother to the fire.
With stiffened hands she thumps away
In honour of the holy day;
Hymns and carols rise and hold
As best they can on blasted scales.
We listen staring at the night
Where faith and failure sound their drums,
And snow is drifting mile on mile.

Our mother's kingdom does not fall,
But year by year the promise fades;
Dreams of our childhood warp and pall,
Caught in the dark fit of the world.
Now, less than what we meant to be,
We watch the night and feed the fire.
We listen as the bent chords climb
Toward alleluias rich but wrong;
We sing, and grieve for what we are
Compared with the intended song.

A Beautiful Question:

As you read this slowly and thoughtfully, where do you find yourself in this poem? Are you the mother with 'so many things to do'? The daughter 'trading tales' at the table? The woman 'caught in the dark fit of the world' and grieving for what you are, or simply someone feeding the fire as 'bent chords climb'?

A Prayer for a Time of Change
from the Corrymeela Community Book of Daily Prayer

God of Endings,
What we thought would not end
has ended.
And we find ourselves here
wondering where we are
and how we got here
and where to go
from here.
Be with us, here, at the end.
help us place our feet on this ground
help us lick our wounds,
help us look up and around.
Help us believe
the story
of today.
Because you know all
about the endings
of today.
And you are not afraid.

AMEN

A Beautiful Question:
As 2020 draws to a close, what wounds are you
licking and what can you see when you look up
and around?



Hold Yourself Together and Pull Yourself Apart
by Pádraig Ó Tuama

In a time of desolation do not make a life-changing decision and do not go back on a decision made during a time of consolation. Remember the times of consolation. – Ignatius of Loyola

Remember that this has passed before
and that there will be more days
of plenty...eventually.

Pay attention to your feelings
keep those feelings sharp.
Try to hold yourself together
and pull yourself apart.
Keep your eyes on the prize
that you might never gain.

Don't ignore whatever pain is blooming
like a flower you have planted.
Occupy your hands with kindness.
Remember you can see, even though this blindness
is remarkable.

Mark the places that you're feeling
mark the places where you're needing held
mark the evenings that are dark
and mark the afternoon of coping.

Mark the morning that you waken
finding mourning has been taken
to a different part of heartland.

Remember what has passed before.
Pour your body like the sacramental wine
pour your blood with loving.



N'eilah
by Marge Piercy

The hinge of the year
the great gates opening
and then slowly slowly
closing on us.

I always imagine those gates
hanging over the ocean
fiery over the stone grey
waters of evening.

We cast what we must
change about ourselves
onto the waters flowing
to the sea. The sins,
errors, bad habits, whatever

you call them, dissolve.
When I was little I cried
out I! I! I! I want, I want.

Older, I feel less important,
a worker bee in the hive
of history, miles of hard
labor to make my sweetness.

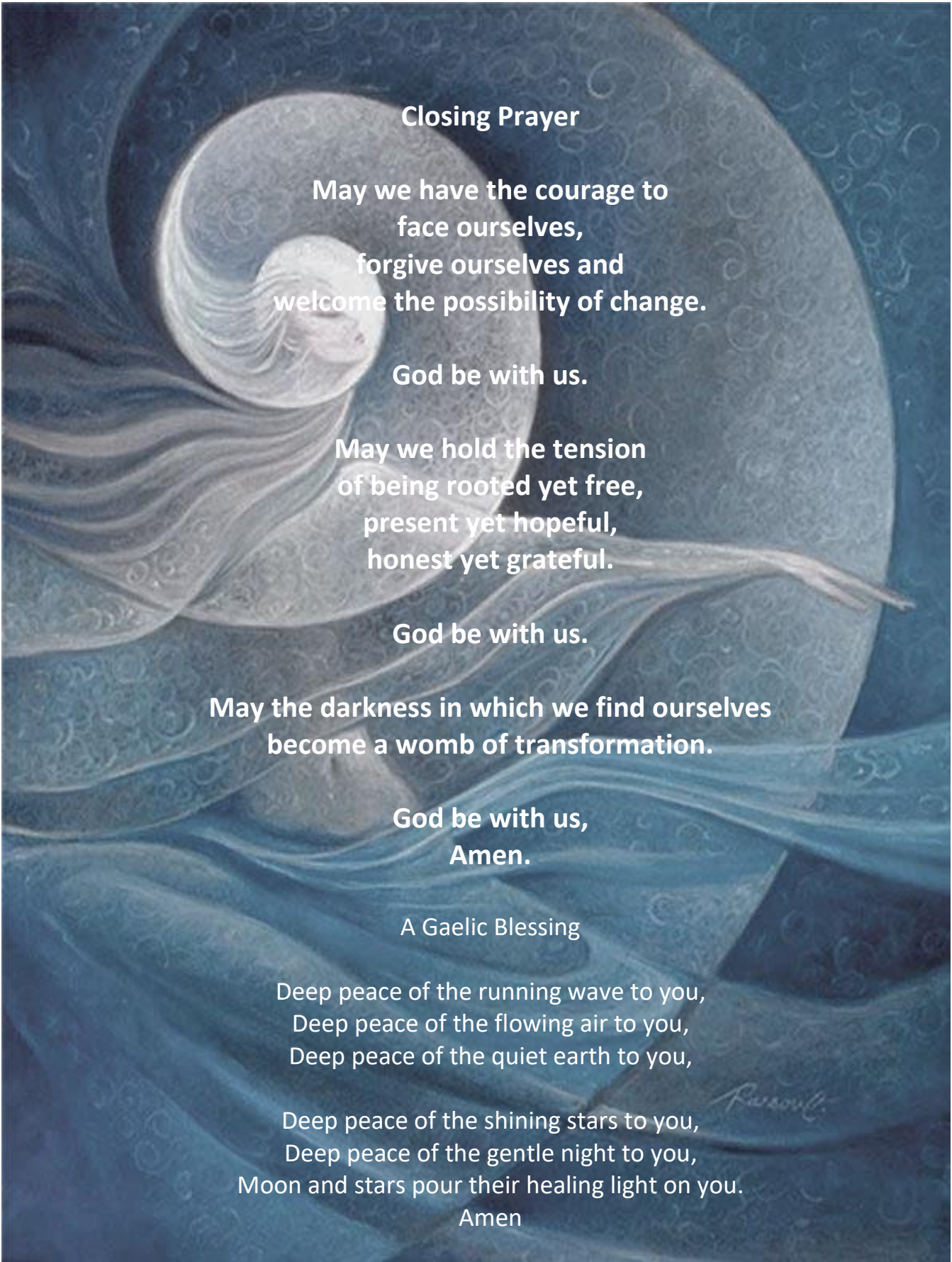
The gates are closing
The light is failing
I kneel before what I love
imploring that it may live.

So much breaks, wears
down, fails in us. We must
forgive our broken promises—
their sharp shards in our hands.

Beautiful Questions:

At the hinge of the year, what are you casting onto
the waters and what do you need to forgive?

Reflecting on the opening blessing, how might
your life awaken to the call of its freedom this
year?



Closing Prayer

**May we have the courage to
face ourselves,
forgive ourselves and
welcome the possibility of change.**

God be with us.

**May we hold the tension
of being rooted yet free,
present yet hopeful,
honest yet grateful.**

God be with us.

**May the darkness in which we find ourselves
become a womb of transformation.**

**God be with us,
Amen.**

A 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,
Deep peace of the gentle night to you,
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.**

Amen