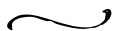


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Celebrations

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ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION



Jesus was a big toucher,
the New Testament has fourteen accounts
of him reaching out to touch another person,
often with healing, always with compassion.

—Patrick McCormick

The ordained stands, hands outstretched, palms up.

Leader: _____, these hands of yours are expressions of both the reality and the symbol of the years of that you have been living your ordination. When your hands were consecrated and anointed for service, you took this blessing seriously. As we bless your hands, we do so with immense gratitude for the quality of your person and your ministry. We remember how you have been a gift to the people gathered here, and to those who cannot be here, all those lives you have touched with the goodness of Christ.

*Those present say after each blessing: **May the blessing of God enfold you.***

We bless your hands that formed the sign of the cross so many times . . .
We bless your hands that put the Bread of Life in countless other hands . . .
We bless your hands that embraced people consumed with grief . . .
We bless your hands that sent a caring note or a message of affirmation . . .
We bless your hands that created enriching and inspiring homilies . . .
We bless your hands that reached out in welcome to shake another's . . .
We bless your hands that drove your car to visit the sick and comfort the dying . . .
We bless your hands that wiped tears of compassion from your eyes . . .
We bless your hands that clapped in gratitude and affirmation . . .
We bless your hands that administered the sacrament of the sick . . .
We bless your hands that held the books you've read for personal growth . . .
We bless your hands that baptized and hallowed those being married . . .
We bless your hands that raised the cross in a Good Friday liturgy . . .
We bless your hands that gave a sign of forgiveness to a penitent . . .
We bless your hands that shared a meal at the table of friendship . . .

We bless your hands that held a phone as you listened to someone in need . . .
We bless your hands that greeted those coming for counseling . . .
We bless your hands that folded in daily meditation and personal prayer . . .

Leader: Together we pray:

*M*ay you go forward this day with faith knowing your hard work and endless efforts have enriched and helped those you served. Each time you look at your hands may you find a reason to hope, remembering all the good they have done. May the blessing of the Holy One enfold you and enhance your life with our gratitude and respect. Amen.

BIRTHDAY MEDITATION: FLOWER GARDEN PATH



Visualize yourself in a peaceful, colorful flower garden. Wide paths lined with blooming plants meander through the hidden glen. This garden full of blooms contains hints of the year ahead of you.

As you enter the garden, a divine companion comes to walk with you in this lovely place, reaching out to hold your hand. The two of you walk slowly, quietly, absorbing the fragrance and loveliness of the flourishing garden.

As you amble along you become aware that certain flowers have a message for you about another year of your life. You turn to inquire about this at the very moment your divine companion leans over, chooses a flower symbolizing *love of self and others*, and hands it to you.

You continue your slow pace, relishing the stillness and bliss within you. As you pass a plant with thick, robust stems, your companion carefully picks one of its flowers and hands it to you. This one represents *Courage* to grow and endure.

Now your companion finds a stem with several blooms on it, symbolizing *Peace—peace of mind, peace of heart, peace for the world*. Reach forth and accept this flower, too.

Turning a bend on the garden path, you come to a tall flower that characterizes *Faith*. You add this gift to your bouquet when it is held out to you.

There are several other flowers meant for you. Continue to walk in the lovely flower garden and see which ones your divine companion offers to you. Receive those flowers, as well.

You sit down now on a bench with your companion and hold the bouquet of flowers near your heart. You say a prayer of thanksgiving for what you have been offered as you begin another year of life.

When you are ready, tuck the flowers in a safe place in your heart, take your companion with you, rise up, and move out of the garden. Continue onward to celebrate the gift of your birth-day.

BIRTHDAY REFLECTION: STORIES IN THE RIPPLES

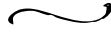


Lake Vermillion with its wide cove
on far end of the north shore,
the constant, small ripples of water
splashing against the rocks,
each miniature wave carrying a story,
some from the ancient glaciers
and some from this present age of mine.
The rain-swollen clouds hold our tales of life,
and drop them into the expansive lake
year after year, absorbing
them into the one Great Story.

Today the ripples invite me to listen intently,
to find within them my own narrative:
the womb-like waters of a nine month gestation,
the gush and push of a small, unknown self
into a world that has grown me
into the person I now think I am.

And who am I? Still a ripple,
mostly composed of water.
Still full of story. Still trying
to tell myself and the world
who I believe I am, who I have become,
and who I wonder I will be
when the story of my watery self
slips forever into the Eternal Waters—
where all the ripples are one.

BLESSING FOR MOTHERS



One springtime I kept finding strings of dried grass and small twigs on the front porch. I solved this mystery by discovering an industrious mother robin building a nest behind the security light. During that same week I was immersed in the novel *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie*, the story of another industrious mother. Hattie worked tirelessly to feed and clothe her many children in extreme poverty (due to a womanizing, gambling husband). Hattie loved her children fiercely but lacked an ability to show them physical or verbal affection.

So many kinds of mothers exist in our world. Each has her own way of being with her children. In the United States we celebrate Mother's Day in May. While I honor the beautiful relationship I had with my birth mother, I think of both young and adult children with tenuous or difficult maternal relationships. Yet, no matter how this relationship is or has been, each mother gives her child the gift of life and the possibility of a worthy future.

A Blessing of Body, Mind, and Spirit for Mothers of All Sorts, Sizes, and Shapes

O mothers, one and all, some of you have carried your children in your womb. Others of you have welcomed babes in need of your attention who came to you from another birth mother. May the love you've poured forth return to you in plenitude.

O mothers, do not live in regret of what you wished you would have done, or what you did do and wished you had not. As you look back on your mothering, may you remember that you tried to do your best, given the circumstances.

O mothers, those of you for whom much of your life with your children is before you, do not imagine you can do this alone. Remember it takes a lot of leaning on the Divine Mother whose heart enfolds every mother and child. May you draw strength daily from her kindly sustenance.

O mothers, do not forget to care for yourself. Find what enriches and gladdens your heart. Be good to your body and spirit. Remember you are worthy of care and attention. May you have the vitality it takes to give generously of yourself.

O mothers, you who have gone on to another sphere of life, we welcome our memories of you and remember how much you mean to us. May the peace you now have flow into the weary and troubled hearts of mothers everywhere.

O mothers, for the countless times your hard work and generous self-giving was never thanked or acknowledged, was rejected or taken for granted, may you know yourself loved and appreciated today.

O mothers, we call today on the Divine Mother to draw you to her spacious heart, to replenish what needs revitalization in you. May you know her comfort, peace, and tender embrace. May you hear the Divine Mother's song of love humming in you. Amen.

A LITANY OF FATHERS EVERYWHERE



Pause after each group of fathers. Unite with the ones who are mentioned, remembering we are one in spirit; draw forth loving kindness from your heart and send it forth to these fathers. After each segment of named fathers, pray the following:

Heavenly Father, we bring our prayers for these earthly fathers to you.

Fathers holding a newly birthed child . . .

Fathers embracing a sick child . . .

Fathers counseling a wild child . . .

Fathers blessing every child . . .

Pause and pray:

Heavenly Father, we bring our prayers for these earthly fathers to you.

Weary fathers . . .

Depressed fathers . . .

Hungry fathers . . .

Happy fathers . . .

Pause and pray.

Fathers in offices . . .

Fathers at home . . .

Fathers in prosperity . . .

Fathers in poverty . . .

Pause and pray.

Homeless fathers . . .

Angry fathers . . .

Tender fathers . . .

Caring fathers . . .

Pause and pray.

Fathers who abuse . . .

Fathers who kill . . .

Fathers who weep . . .

Fathers who laugh . . .

Pause and pray.

Inconsiderate fathers . . .

Hard-hearted fathers . . .

Soft-hearted fathers . . .

Faith-filled fathers . . .

Pause and pray.

Fathers who stay . . .

Fathers who leave . . .

Fathers who hope . . .

Fathers who pray . . .

Pause and pray.

Energetic fathers . . .

Hard-working fathers . . .

Imprisoned fathers . . .

Traumatized fathers . . .

Pause and pray.

Trusted fathers . . .

Reckless fathers . . .

Addicted fathers . . .

Helpful fathers . . .

Pause and pray.

Fathers who produced life . . .

Fathers who instilled confidence . . .

Fathers who nurtured faith . . .

Fathers who never gave up . . .

Pause and pray

Fathers who long to be loved . . .

Fathers who never stop loving . . .

Fathers who are deceased . . .

Fathers who are a blessing . . .

Pause and pray.

Other fathers we want to mention (*voice these names*) . . .

All: We celebrate you, fathers of our world, fathers of our lives. We pray you will receive the strength and renewed dedication that Jesus found in his mountainside solitude as he sojourned with his Father. May all you have given from the generosity of your love be returned to you a hundredfold and more. Peace be yours, peace, peace, peace.